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Issue 183
January 2017

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MERCEDES ENTHUSIAST

is published on the third Friday of each month

Editorial comment and the latest from the Mercedes Enthusiast team



The new Mercedes-AMG Hotline is free of charge, and I anticipate that it will go down well with enthusiast owners



AN INTERESTING MAIL ITEM DROPPED ON MY DESK QUITE RECENTLY, complete with the exciting words 'AMG Driving performance'. It turns out that Mercedes-Benz UK has launched a dedicated hotline for AMG owners, covering general support and roadside recovery. "Think of it as the most direct line to your 'AMG pit crew'" says the first paragraph of the letter, a team of AMG experts available to owners 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calling the number (00800 264 77777) to find out more about the Mercedes-AMG service, the calming Irish voice on the other end of the telephone line revealed that this new department opened in October, and follows the model of AMG services launched in Germany and France. The friendly 'pit member' also reminded me that because our C55 AMG Estate was recently serviced at the local Benz dealership, we were entitled to two years free roadside recovery to the nearest dealer. But note this cover isn't exclusive to AMGs, rather a nationwide initiative for all Mercedes cars.

The AMG hotline is free of charge, and I anticipate that it will go down well with enthusiast owners, including those who've just bought the new E63 - a 604bhp monster of a saloon that we've just tested in Portugal. You can read our verdict from page 24. For this issue, we've also gathered together four generations of AMG's baby roadster for comparison, and met the owner of a stunning, race prepared Gullwing that remains street legal. And how can I forget our cover star - the 124-series cabriolet (left), which has just turned 25 years old. Buy one now while you still can!

Kyle Molyneux
Editor

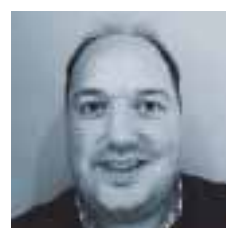
Who's been doing what in this month's Mercedes Enthusiast...



Kyle Fortune

"From the sublime to the ridiculous, the E63 covers the lot!" On road and track, Kyle Fortune finds AMG's 'redefined performance saloon' something of a

revelation, and very much to his liking. "Once a bit of a one-dimensional dragster with charm, the AMG E-Class is freshly imbued with agility, poise and sophistication to match its always eye-widening pace. A high point for AMG, and demonstrative of a company that's at its very best presently." The story begins on page 24.



Matt Robinson

"Coffee. That's what we needed - lots of coffee. Luckily, I managed not to spill these vital supplies over the SLC43's seat for our big group shoot, instead

getting the beverages back to our brilliant SLK AMG owners," says Matt Robinson. "Seeing these rapid roadsters all together was a real treat and the day went amazingly smoothly - even if our windy hilltop location meant piping hot drinks were an essential!" How did the SLC43 compare to its predecessors? Turn to page 54 and find out...



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The latest Mercedes launches, news and motorsport

NEWS



MAYBACH DROPTOP

The Mercedes-Maybach S650 Cabriolet boasts a 621bhp V12 biturbo motor and will be limited to 300 units – on sale spring 2017

AT OVER £250,000, Maybach's new 12-cylinder, four-seat drophead already finds itself with few rivals. But the company has ramped up the car's exclusivity further still by limiting production to just 300 examples.

That's important, as the new S650 Cabriolet has the same 621bhp/737lb ft torque engine as the Mercedes-AMG S65 Cabriolet, but costs over 50 grand more. Further helping to justify the increased expense are 20-inch forged Maybach wheels with a bi-chromatic finish, plus a new front bumper with additional use of chrome. There are also concept inspired seats with 'progressive perforations', and diamond quilting on the side bolsters and 'Budapest' piping, as well as a unique piece of trim on top of where the fabric roof is

Maybach design forged alloys come in size 20-inch to make an even bigger statement.



V12 biturbo with same power as the S65 motor, so 621bhp with over 700lb ft of torque.



housed, plus a choice of nine special interior colour schemes.

Not done yet, Maybach has also fitted thick floor mats, chrome plated '1 of 300' lettering on the central cup holder lid, and given the leather wrapped steering wheel

additional Maybach lettering. An exclusive Maybach travel luggage set, plus Aircap, Airscarf and Swarovski elements for the headlamps are included, too. Each owner will also receive a special certificate signed by Daimler boss Dr Dieter Zetsche.

For such a big and well equipped car, the S650's 0-62mph of 4.1 seconds is not to be scoffed at. Nor is 23.5mpg on the combined fuel cycle with 272g/km CO2 emissions – not that wealthy buyers will really care about such things. The top speed is 155mph.



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ROSBERG WINS & RETIRES

Mercedes-AMG's Nico Rosberg is the 2016 Formula 1 World Champion, following an epic duel with team mate Lewis Hamilton in the final race, held at Abu Dhabi in late November.

Such was his pace in free practice and qualifying, Hamilton never looked in doubt of winning the grand prix, but he tried everything he could to push Rosberg out of second place

and gain a crucial points advantage in the championship standings. This did not go down well with the Mercedes team, who asked Hamilton on more than one occasion to change his tactics, for fear of a late charging Ferrari stealing victory.

In the end, however, Hamilton's efforts came to nothing and Rosberg maintained second position, winning

the title by five points and giving the team its eighth 1-2 finish of the season; Mercedes-AMG sealed victory in the Constructors' standings a few races ago.

A few days after the 2016 finale, Nico Rosberg made the shock announcement on social media that he would be retiring from Formula 1 at the age of 31.

Evolution II



AUCTION RESULTS

A UK registered 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II made £120,375 in Silverstone Auctions' mid November sale. With some 41,000km (25,000 miles) on the clock, chassis number 28 of 502 compared well with the sub 2,000-mile example the company sold earlier this year for £292,500.

In the same Silverstone sale was a 27,000-mile R129 SL500 from 2000, which made its seller a cool £24,750. Meanwhile, a 1988 560SEL formerly owned by King Hussein and Queen Noor of Jordan changed hands for £30,375 with under 26,000 miles covered.

Also of interest was a 1993 190E LE with 50,000 miles, and a 1983 R107 500SL with 67,000 miles for sale in Brightwells' Classic and Vintage sale in late November. The 190E LE made a solid £4,500, while the 500SL sold for a mere £13,000.

R129 SL500



190E LE



560SEL



R107 500SL



△ AMG PRICING

UK pricing has been announced for a host of new AMGs. The GT R Coupe costs £143,245. The GT C Roadster, meanwhile, is £139,445 and the 'base' GT Roadster £110,145. Come back next month for our first driving impressions of the GT R.



△ GOODWOOD

The 2017 Goodwood Festival of Speed will take place on June 29 to July 2. Dates for the Goodwood Revival have also been confirmed for September 8 to 10.

□ CHARGING BOOST

Daimler AG, BMW Group, Ford Motor Company and Volkswagen Group with Audi and Porsche are working together in an unprecedented move to improve the charging infrastructure for plug-in cars, with thousands of new fast charging stations planned for major routes in Europe by 2020.

▽ SL PARTS SALE

The SL Shop in Worcestershire is hosting a 107-series SL used parts 'clear-out' on January 15 from 9am to 4pm. Everything must go, and parts are sold on a first come first serve basis. Cash and cards are accepted. "Bring your van, your trailer or whatever - just come and take it off us," says proprietor Sam Bailey. "What doesn't sell will be binned the week afterwards."



▽ GT3 IN AMERICA

Next year, the Mercedes-AMG GT3 will make its debut in the biggest North American sports car series, the IMSA WeatherTech SportsCar Championship. Riley Motorsport will run two cars, one under 'AMG-Team Riley Motorsports' and the other under the name 'WeatherTech Racing'.



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Expert analysis of recent events in the Mercedes-Benz market

W100 600s

WORDS EDWARD BRIDGER-STILLE IMAGES DD CLASSICS, ASTON WORKSHOP, AUCTIONATA & DAIMLER AG

Supremely luxurious, impossibly sophisticated and highly powerful, it is no wonder W100 Mercedes-Benz 600s are commanding strong money, states our market expert

principally to meet the needs of heads of state, industry, pop stars and popes.

Owners included Pope Paul VI, Idi Amin, Marshal Tito and other more cultural icons such as John Lennon, Coco Chanel, Karen Carpenter and Jack Nicholson. No car can be considered a true star car, however, without some screen time alongside 007. Villain Ernst Blofeld chose one in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* and *Diamonds Are Forever*, whilst Kamal Khan is also seen leaving Sotheby's in a 600 in *Octopussy*. Even champion pugilist Jeremy Clarkson featured one in *Top Gear*'s 'Mercedes-Benz 600 vs Rolls-Royce Corniche Coupe challenge' when it was pitted against James May's Corniche – and won, by the way...

Luxury equipment for the rear cabin included multi function air conditioning, curtains on the windows and fully (electric) reclining rear seats, still the most amazing feature of the 600! The 600s also have a hydraulic pressure system that powers the windows, seats, sunroof, bootlid, and automatically closing doors. Steering column adjustable air suspension provides excellent ride quality and sure-footed handling over any road surface.

Only 2,677 were made of which 2,190 were four-door saloons, 429 were Pullman limousines and 59 were landaulets, so watching sales is something to take into account when looking for one. The limousines or Pullmans are more costly than the saloons, and often feature in important collections. The Aston Workshop in Durham has a restored, 98,000-mile 600 short-wheelbase from 1967, for sale at £80,000. Meanwhile, DD Classics in Surrey has a stunning six-door Pullman, one of just 20 UK supplied, right-hand drive cars, described as impeccable with 68,000 miles on the odometer and costing £275,000.

The short-wheelbase model is obviously the place to start; however, do be aware, certainly at auction, that you do tend to get what you pay for. The 'No reserve' sale in Italy in



DD Classics' six-door Pullman in RHD



IN A SLIGHT DEPARTURE from the normal look at the marketplace as a whole, I thought this month I would spend a few moments looking at the 1964-1981 Mercedes-Benz 600. An often overlooked area for obvious reasons, price alone often prohibiting enthusiasts with more grounded financial investment potential. But there are deals to be done out there, and the sector is just as volatile as others.

As you may or may not know, the W100 600 limousine began life as a substitute for a certain German dictator's 770 Grosser of the 1930s; a super prestige saloon to rival the British Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud and Bentley S-series motorcars.

It is clear to see that prices have proved reliable, with a slight incline in recent years

Supremely well equipped, luxurious and very advanced, the 600's powerful 6.3-litre M100 V8 engine delivered 247bhp, riding on air suspension with disc brakes all round, variable ride control, power steering and a host of other luxuries. All destined to failure if you believed the reaction from Crewe at the time.

Two basic types of the 600 were available: the five-/six-seat saloon with a

wheelbase of 3.2m which could be supplied with a central division, and the seven passenger limousine with a wheelbase of 3.9m, plus a central cabin division and a choice of either four doors with two backward facing seats in the rear, or six doors with two forward facing folding seats in the rear. The two latter choices were offered



◀ A four-door outside an imposing German property, photographed in 1963.



Short-wheelbase 600 offered by Aston Workshop



November had a 1975 SWB version, condition unknown, estimated at €20,000-€30,000 (£17,000-£26,000) but don't be fooled; this was seized stock and underwritten by the auction house. On November 27, the hammer came down at almost €80,000 (£68,000). Elsewhere, a 1965 example showing 45,000km (30,000 miles) offered by German auctioneer Auctionata had a starting estimate of €95,000 (£82,000), with 15 per cent commission.

THE LAST THREE YEARS

So going back to 2013 and plotting the results of the short-wheelbase variants across all European auction houses, it is clear to see that prices have proved reliable with a slight incline in recent years. No horrid surprises and, as you would expect to see, prices dependent upon condition. Watch for hydraulic faults and, for this car in particular, it might be worth investing in a specialist inspection as the complex air conditioning system and extensive body work can be expensive to rectify.

The obvious differential lies between the short- and long-wheelbase version of the model and, as is the mantra, buy the best you can. The market desirability is good despite the tail end of the recession and Brexit, which are often thought to affect market values. Certainly, an investment in a 600 from as far back as 2003 has out-performed its historical rival, the Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud.

The experience from my point of view at Historics is that values have remained buoyant and if you read between the lines at www.k500.com, a market leading guide to classic cars, numbers are up across the board.

These are formidable creatures and, even now, there is nothing quite like them..



Edward Bridger-Still is a Director of Historics at Brooklands, classic car auctioneers, and an owner of many Mercedes cars over the years



Auctionata's 30,000-mile example



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* For M176/M177/M178 4.0 BiTurbo models

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KLEEMANN 

The new smart car aside, every Mercedes displayed in L.A. boasted huge performance

WESTWORLD

Mercedes puts on a great show in Los Angeles, debuting a host of new stars including AMG's E63 and a limited edition Maybach

WORDS **KYLE FORTUNE** IMAGES **DAIMLER AG**

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN Mercedes-Benz's show unveilings in Paris and Los Angeles couldn't have been more marked. While Paris saw the AMG GT/C Roadster revealed the evening before and barely mentioned in the following day's EQ electrifying introduction under the show lights, AMG took centre stage at the West Coast American show in mid November. That's hardly surprising given AMG's sales in California, Dieter Exler, President and CEO of Mercedes-Benz USA and NAFTA announcing record sales both in the USA and internationally, with global sales up 11.7 per cent.

A larger range goes some way to explaining those results, and the ever expanding line up grew further still at the LA show. In the case of the Mercedes-Maybach S650 Cabriolet, it won't be making a huge impact on those overall sales figures, the super luxury division of Mercedes only building 300 examples for its most demanding customers, the 621bhp, six-litre V12 biturbo coming with some bespoke options including matching luggage, unique front styling, a smattering of 'double M' Maybach badges and a €300,000 (£260,000) price tag in its native Germany. That's a sizeable leap over even the AMG S65's price, but as Matthias Lührs, Vice President, Sales, Mercedes-Benz, admitted at the show the new Maybach has already attracted huge interest from Merc's wealthiest customers.

THE AMG SHOW

In stark contrast to that ostentatious, expensive cabriolet was the new smart electric drive also announced by Exler at the show. The compact city car now features a range in excess of 80 miles and promises charging times reduced by as much as 50 per cent.

However, the smart was just a sparky appetiser for the main event: AMG. After being sidelined in Paris, Tobias Moers, Chairman of the Management Board at Mercedes-AMG, had the stage, teasing out the reveal of the E63 S 4Matic+ by first rolling out the GT C Roadster. An important car for the huge West Coast market, perhaps, the GT C wasn't on stage too long, Moers finally able to reveal what he's been working on – a car he was barely able to contain his excitement about when we spoke to him recently: the new E63. Describing it as "the new definition of the performance saloon," the matte black Edition 1 example on

New Maybach, E63, GT C Roadster and GLE45 made their debuts in the USA.



The new Maybach has already attracted huge interest from Merc's wealthiest customers



The 549bhp GT C Roadster costs just shy of £140,000.



E63 has AMG's Air Body Control suspension.

Gorden Wagener introduces the exclusive, V12 powered Maybach S650 Cabriolet.



stage absolutely screaming menace, even with that four-litre biturbo V8 turned off.

We know the spec now: four-wheel drive, a frankly ridiculous 604bhp and a 'Drift Mode' within the driver aids. Even the usually poker faced Moers couldn't suppress smiles when discussing his new baby. It was not the only 4WD AMG on display – the GLE43 also appearing in LA. Of course, after the Paris talk of AMG's hypercar future Moers once again mentioned this project, though revealed no more than we already know; so an F1 derived hybrid and structure, and epic performance. But with so much else to get excited about, the promise of a hypercar in the next few years is something we can wait for, that E63 piquing our interest at the moment, and the GT R and GT C and... you get the idea.

Mercedes is on a roll, and Los Angeles – once a show quiet for launches – featured as many debuts as the manufacturer might once have done in an entire year, such is the pace of model proliferation and the demand for them, no matter how they're powered.

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Our man in the know tackles everything Mercedes-Benz – this month...

USED CAR WARRANTY



This month, **David Sutherland** considers the merits of buying used car warranty cover, and compares price quotes for several cars on *Mercedes Enthusiast's* Running Report fleet

I heard recently that a high end sports car dealer in Derbyshire was covering a 2007 Bugatti Veyron it was selling for around £1m with a 12-month used car warranty.

Nothing unusual sounding about that, except that the policy supplied, by Warrantywise, would cost £10,000.

That being more than many people would spend on a second hand car, it set me wondering, not for the first time, if warranties are worth having. I think there are two schools of thought on this, which define you as either a pessimist or an optimist: those who won't feel secure without warranty protection, and those who assume that the car will be fine, and even if it's not, that's a bridge to be crossed later.

When buying a car from a dealer, you have a certain amount of legal protection, including a refund if the car is seriously faulty, but for long term protection you have to buy an insurance backed warranty, although determined negotiators might get this included in the price. But did you know that you can get a used car warranty without buying a car?

With just a few mouse clicks, the car parked outside your house can be covered – just a few questions, and no inspection. So I decided to see what Warrantywise had to offer for the UK based cars on *Mercedes Enthusiast's* Running Report fleet. I liked the way the Warrantywise website works: you input details, play around with the various contribution and limit levels, and you get the quote instantly, rather than having to wait for

an electronic reply. And no 'weasel words' to restrict payouts, frontman Quentin Willson repeatedly stressed (see below).

I received a courtesy call from Warrantywise within about two minutes, which was impressive even if I didn't really want to speak to them about it. I also liked how the quote clearly set out the terms and



A warranty for a used SLS AMG is around £2,500.



David could cover his CLK63 for £177 per month.

With just a few mouse clicks, the car parked outside your house can be covered

conditions, such as the excess payable on a claim, the total repair liability, and not least the labour rate covered – I once came unstuck on that last point, when the labour payment the

warranty offered didn't cover what the garage charged. You have been warned.

For costs at the lower end, I used the A180 CDI that I sold in the spring, and ticked 'up to £100 per hour' in the labour charge box, as you rarely get anything below this in London, where I live. With no excess to pay, and a maximum repair cost of £4,470, 12 months cover would cost £52 a month, or £576 if I paid upfront for the full year.

I then moved up to our ML320 CDI and was quoted £113 and £1,242; if I wanted three-year cover the cost was £3,478. To add context, this last figure is more than a third of the SUV's current forecourt value. The next car was Editor Kyle Molyneux's 2004 C55 AMG Estate. Oh, sorry Kyle, they don't want to know – your car's over 12 years old.

The fourth quote was for my much loved daily driver, the CLK63 AMG Coupe I purchased in April 2016. This would be £177

a month, £1,944 for a year, or £5,442 for three years. Given the complexity of the 6.2-litre V8 engine, I ticked the maximum repair limit of £10,000; had I restricted this to half that, the cost would have been £125 a month.

Aiming to get an idea of how the warranty cost of a very expensive Mercedes would compare with the Veyron, the final quote was for a 2011 SLS AMG that, sadly, is not on our fleet, but which was on sale for £144,950 at the same dealer offering the Bugatti. That would cost me £229 a month (with a labour rate up to £200

per hour), or £2,518 a year, or £7,051 for three years. So there's a cross section of costs, but are these policies good value? If your car develops lots of problems, then yes, because even something relatively straightforward such as replacing a

cylinder head gasket is going to be over £1,000 on most Mercedes-Benzes.

On car breakdowns, I class myself an optimist and feel lucky enough to choose used cars that don't go badly wrong, so if I took out the above cover on my CLK and didn't make a claim I would feel it was money wasted. Indeed, £177 each month would be enough to repay a three-year loan on an interesting older Benz – not including a warranty, of course.



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The spotlight on Mercedes from within the motoring industry – this month...

NO LIMIT



Mercedes is showing all the signs that it will be top dog by 2020, says our mystery writer, with the company pushing boundaries in every area that matters

There is a mood at Mercedes-Benz at the moment, and it's good. I've never known the company to be on such good form across the entire brand and model line up, Mercedes-Benz very much on its A game presently. There's the constant winning in Formula 1 if that's of interest to you, plus the spin-off AMG hypercar project that will borrow a lot of F1 tech and expertise, the EQ project laying out the foundations for a plug-in electrified future, and huge investment in a new engine family which will help Mercedes-Benz power its future through the transitional period from internal combustion through hybridisation to that eventual wholesale adoption of electrification.

Obviously all this has not just happened overnight – it's

grown, to the point that Mercedes-Benz has its best, most comprehensive model line up it's ever had. Crucially, too, there are few, if any, models that need a proviso in their respective classes. The C-Class is as good as the BMW 3-Series rival, indeed, it's better in many ways, and not just those traditionally associated with being a Mercedes-Benz. The same is true of the E-Class; it retains all the qualities familiar with Mercedes-Benz's core saloon model, yet adds some sparkle to the drive, and in AMG E63 guise it over delivers in the grins department. Indeed,

looking at AMG, it exemplifies the whole company's form presently. AMG keeps surprising us with ever better cars, power never in question, but dynamically they're more engaging, capable and enjoyable than ever.

That's true of non AMG models, too, all of the Mercedes-Benz range, with the possible, and excusable exception of the B-Class, being genuinely enjoyable to drive, the C- and E-Class particularly so. With the S-Class in line for its most comprehensive



Maybach has form with large coupe concepts, the Exelero below debuting in 2004.



I always thought that Maybach missed an open goal by not building a small run of its wild Exelero coupe

versions of the S-Class range as well as, potentially, the GLS. But once all that's done Maybach needs a signature model like AMG is getting.

Having stood alongside the Vision Mercedes-Maybach 6, might I chip in with an idea? Find a way to build the car in a series of several hundred, choose a huge asking price, and watch the world's super rich queue around the block to buy it. As a brand building exercise it would be epic – I always thought that Maybach missed a huge open goal by not building a small run of its wild Exelero coupe.



Turn to page 24 to read our thoughts on the new Mercedes-AMG E63.

overhaul in the coming months we can expect more at the top end of the range, the S-Class gaining a development of the E-Class's electronic architecture to further add to its autonomous driving arsenal. The firm's push for model diversification has yielded results too, particularly in regards to SUVs, Mercedes-Benz now having proper, competitive and desirable contenders in every SUV segment, the GLC and GLE and their respective coupes tempting buyers out of X3s, X5s, Q5s and Q7s, while the addition of a pickup in 2017/2018 will allow the company to tap into the US marketplace with a premium proposition – something none of its rivals are able to offer.

AMG's growth has been meteoric. The fact boss Tobias Moers is now admitting the existence of the hypercar project is evidence in itself of a hugely successful brand, the AMG GT and its roadster relations giving customers plenty to get excited about until that F1 derived monster arrives. Then there's Mercedes-Maybach, it brave of Benz to resurrect the old brand, though cleverly doing so as a branding exercise rather than trying to establish stand-alone models. This tactic should be fine for a few years, including super exclusive

In the brave new world of a resurgent Mercedes-Benz, I've no doubt the big, two-door Maybach would find plenty of interested buyers, and what a way to cement the reputation of the revived brand with a whole new breed of buyers...

► Our insider is a globe-trotting road tester driving the latest machines from Mercedes-Benz and those cars from its fiercest rivals

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



LETTERS

**STAR
LETTER**

TIME FOR TUITION

■ I find it staggering that AMG's new E63 saloon has more power and far more torque than a 6.2-litre SLS – a bespoke, purpose built supercar which was considered one of the fastest and most capable machines in existence just a few years ago.

The first official AMG E-Class, the E36, had a naturally aspirated straight-six producing 268bhp with 284lb ft torque. The new E63, however, has a twin-turbocharged V8 that produces as much as 604bhp with 627lb ft of torque. Where we go from here is anyone's guess. But surely now is the time to make tuition on a racing circuit mandatory before the keys



to a new AMG are handed over? That way, owners would learn all about their car's fierce character in a safe environment and, more importantly, how to control it in the correct manner.

Carl Hatchet, Yorkshire



△ The 2,685cc five-pot in the C270 CDI makes 168bhp/295lb ft torque, and achieves 40mpg.

FIVE-CYLINDER DIESEL

■ Finding a 12-year old Mercedes with one owner from new and with a full Mercedes service record is very rare. But I couldn't believe it when I bought this 2004 C270 CDI, with 154,000 miles on the clock, and the salesman at Woodland Carriage Company in Kent handed me a thick folder full of receipts, including every MOT.

Darren Dickenson, Bromley

WHY WOULDN'T HE?

■ Formula 1 is a team sport, but that sentiment only goes so far. Hamilton's tactics in Abu Dhabi did not impress Mercedes, but doubtless any other driver would have done exactly the same thing in his position. Trying to hold up a team mate to gain an advantage is part and parcel of racing when things go down to the wire. I cannot understand why certain

quarters of the media, and indeed some members of the public, gave Hamilton such a hard time about his driving. These guys are born racers, and will do anything to win. Hamilton did not break any rules, and he shook Rosberg's hand at the end of the race like a true gentleman. The whole team should move on now and concentrate on next season.

Rob Harris, Cheshire



△ Justin Harkley loves the new E220d unit.

THE DARK SIDE

■ I have resisted buying a diesel powered car my whole motoring life, but that could be about to change. My first car was a Renault 5, followed by an Austin Montego. Then came a better job and a Volkswagen Scirocco. Since then I've driven nothing but Mercedes including an E320, a C200 Estate and my current car, an E200 CGI

BlueEfficiency saloon. Why the change of heart? I have just test driven the new E220d SE saloon and cannot believe how much diesel engine technology has progressed. I would say the new two-litre engine is actually quieter than my old C200 petrol, but has far greater performance, plus of course it's much kinder on the wallet at the refuelling station. I wonder if anyone else feels the same way as me?

Justin Harkley, Poole



△ Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton made life difficult for team mate Nico Rosberg in Abu Dhabi.

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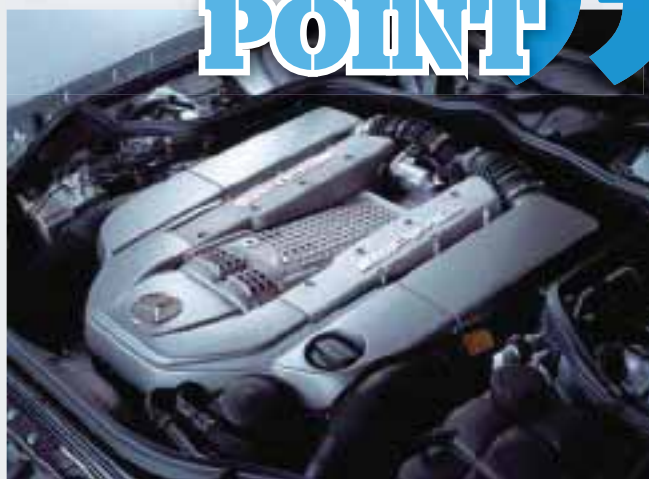
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f "A car that looks amazing, oozes charm from every pore, and still works as a daily driver." **Steve Holder**
- The 126 SEC is one of the stars of our upcoming 'Best Merc Coupes' issue

f "Rosberg deserved the title. He made the most of every opportunity he was given." **Austin Baker**
- 10 wins for Hamilton, though...

TALKING POINT



This month's Talking Point...
Naturally aspirated, turbocharged or supercharged - how do you like your Mercedes-Benz engine?

"It doesn't matter to me. They all sound magnificent." **Sam Hall**

"I like large displacement naturally aspirated." **Oceano Indico**

"On a normal petrol motor up to two litres a kompressor or turbocharger. A V6 has to be naturally aspirated, and a V8 or V12 supercharged." **Ernie Fourie**

"A naturally aspirated V8 is music to my ears, and there's much less to go wrong." **Robert Vint**

"Every set up has its charm, but a turbo is nice." **Michael Strauss**

Take part in **Talking Point** every month on Facebook and Twitter.
See the bottom of page 20 for our respective websites!

MERCSPOTTER



"I thought you'd be interested in this beauty, which I spotted on holiday on the Greek island of Skopelos," writes Mr W Morris from Cambridgeshire. "I've never seen a W202 C-Class in worse shape but, although I didn't see it moving, I'm certain there's some life left in the poor thing! Keep up the good work."

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



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“

WE'RE NOW IN THE
REALM OF THE
600BHP+ SALOON

”



AMG's four-litre V8 has been significantly reworked and can shut down four cylinders.

“What don’t you like about the car?” asks German racing legend and all round good man Bernd Schneider. There’s an uncomfortable silence around the table as interviewee becomes interviewer. Stuck for answers, “I cannot afford it,” is the best response to break the silence. Of course, we are talking about the E63 S 4Matic+, the car which, to paraphrase AMG’s Oliver Wiech, Director of Vehicle Development, ‘redefines the performance saloon’.

A bold proclamation, but as that difficult-to-answer-question from Schneider proves, AMG has done a very convincing job. Should we have expected anything less, though? AMG is very much playing its A game at the moment, the products coming from Affalterbach being little short of exceptional. That’s extraordinary, given both the volume and proliferation of models. But even so, the expectation for the E63 was that it would be something quite special.

Certainly the specification over delivers, the numbers associated with it previously unthinkable from a series production model. We’re now in the realm of the 600bhp+ saloon, the E63 S 4Matic+’s output rated at 604bhp. That is backed with some serious twist: torque output of 627lb ft no

longer in the clichéd stump-pulling league, more like forest clearing. If that seems excessive, then there’s an AMG E63 ‘lite’, the non S dropping those numbers back to 563bhp and 553lb ft respectively. Still mighty then, but why you’d ever choose that over the S is genuinely difficult for me to fathom. There’s no economical argument, excepting the as yet unannounced list price of course, both E63s achieving a combined consumption figure of 31.7mpg, and CO2 emissions of 203g/km.

Not choosing the S also means you lose the electronically controlled rear differential for a simpler mechanical one, which you might not notice but you’ll always *know*. Then there’s the 0.1-second difference in the 0–62mph time, the S’s 3.4 seconds increasing to 3.5 seconds in non S form. How could you ever show your face at the pub again knowing you could have got there fractionally quicker? The S also loses you the segment first fitment of dynamic engine mounts, which situates the four-litre biturbo V8 on active supports. They contain magnetic fluid which allows stiffer or softer settings when a current is passed through them. Overkill, perhaps, but when you have so much power to contain, and exploit, every detail matters. The S it is then...

AMG STRIKES BACK

The engine itself has been significantly overhauled in the E63. To gain that increased output the twin, ‘hot vee’ mounted turbochargers are now twin-scroll. The combined result is increased power plus improved responsiveness. There’s a new intake system too, while the internals includes new pistons, which are both lighter and stronger. Peak power arrives between 5,750rpm and 6,500rpm, while the surfeit of torque arrives at 2,500rpm and hangs around until 4,500rpm.

It’s flexible then, so much so that AMG could have fitted a four-speed automatic and the E63 would still be indecently quick, but instead there’s a nine-speed auto. Dubbed AMG Speedshift MCT in Affalterbach speak, that MCT being Multi Clutch Technology, it features a wet start-off clutch for the benefits it brings to shift speeds. Apparently, the gearbox needed significant work to be able to cope with the E63’s torque. ▷





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JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-AMG E63 4Matic+ (W213)

ENGINE M177 3,982cc V8 biturbo

POWER 563bhp@5,750-6,500rpm

TORQUE 553lb ft@2,250-5,000rpm

TRANSMISSION 9-speed auto, 4WD

WEIGHT 1,950kg

0-62MPH 3.5sec

TOP SPEED 155mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 31.7mpg

CO2 EMISSIONS 203-209g/km

YEARS PRODUCED 2016-on

Mercedes-AMG E63 S 4Matic+ (W213)

ENGINE M177 3,982cc V8 biturbo

POWER 604bhp@5,750-6,500rpm

TORQUE 627lb ft@2,500-4,500rpm

TRANSMISSION 9-speed auto, 4WD

WEIGHT 1,955kg

0-62MPH 3.4sec

TOP SPEED 155mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 31.7mpg

CO2 EMISSIONS 203-209g/km

YEARS PRODUCED 2016-on

Figures for car as pictured; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined; top speeds electronically limited



The E63's 'Race Start' launch control system is now even easier to activate, says AMG.

Digital speedo as standard with special AMG styles.



▷ All those ratios, and the engine's ability to seamlessly shift to four cylinders when all eight aren't necessary, help the four-litre unit achieve some remarkable economy figures. That it betters its predecessor by 3.7mpg on the combined cycle, and cuts CO2 emissions by up to 32g/km – despite the extra power increase and 4WD – is impressive.

An E63 with 4Matic isn't news – the previous car was offered with it in left-hand drive markets. What's changed is that 4WD is standard, the E63 coming with extra driveshafts up front whether you like the idea or not. AMG boss Tobias Moers admits that, given the engine outputs on tap now, four-wheel drive is inevitable, the advantages significantly outweighing any arguments against it.

FOUR PLAY

Even so, in either E63 specification that AMG specific 4Matic+ system remains largely rear-wheel drive, and in a characteristically unhinged AMG manner there's effectively the ability to switch off drive to the front if you wish. A pull on both gearshift paddles and a further right pull switches the E63 into 'Drift mode', though only if you're in the most extreme setting via Drive Select, as you'd likely be anyway – even if the idea of Drift mode in Comfort is an amusing proposition...

Looking at the rear of Schneider's GT S through

the passenger window while driving the tight, right-hand uphill bend at Portugal's Algarve International Circuit, or just 'Portimão' to those in the know, reveals that Drift mode is entirely unnecessary. With the Dynamic Select set to Race and the ESP switched off, the E63 S 4Matic+ does a very good impression of being rear-wheel drive without the necessary paddle-grabbing decoupling of the drive to the front. Hilariously, laugh out loud so, the E63 S loses nothing and in reality gains a lot by being four-wheel drive. Pick your line, push the accelerator and the E63 S's rear gently arcs to easily contained power oversteer.

The transition, and ease by which it's possible to change the car's attitude under power reveals not just a chassis that's extremely well sorted, but a powertrain with wonderful response. If you're feeling a little less brave, or there's some rain, just tap that ESP button once and 'Sport Handling' mode gives plenty of yaw with some reassurance that the electronics will intervene if you run out of talent.

That GT S isn't getting away then, and it's not just down to the E63's mighty output. The way it manages its near two-tonne kerb weight takes a while to fully appreciate, the space of

the modern, 2.9-mile long circuit denying you full comprehension of this ability, at least for a time. A run on the road underlines that this big muscular saloon is more than just about brute strength. Think gymnast mixed with power lifter and some sprinter genes thrown in for good measure.

The four-litre V8 biturbo is one of Affalterbach's greatest engines, and is more powerful here – notably more eager and sounding as fantastic as it always has. Open up those sports pipes and there's the fizz, pop and crackle that turns the E63 S from civilised executive saloon to purposeful, snarling racer, though even this transformation is achieved with a subtlety ▷

THE E63 S LOSES NOTHING AND
IN REALITY GAINS A LOT BY
BEING FOUR-WHEEL
DRIVE





Will the four-wheel drive E63 drift? Of course it will - with a little electronic trickery.



402mm diameter front discs part of the optional carbon ceramic braking system.

▷ in keeping with the E-Class's DNA. Wiech admits that the E63 arguably represents AMG's toughest challenge because it must have the broadest range of abilities, the focus on other AMG products being narrower and, as a result, somewhat easier to achieve. So the E63 S 4Matic+ has to be everything to everyone, as adept as a comfortable, luxurious limousine as it is a track rat. And it is, and then some.

Specify it in a sober colour with chrome trim rather than blacked out details, alloy coloured wheels rather than black and the E63 S could genuinely be considered understated. Leave Dynamic Select in Comfort and, aside

“
WHAT IS
IMMEDIATELY
APPARENT IS THE
CHASSIS REVISIONS'
EFFECT ON THE STEERING
”

from the low, deeply bolstered sports seats and smattering of AMG tell-tales inside, including all sorts of AMG specific screens, timers and performance meters, and you could just about convince someone that this is an ordinary E. There's some additional tyre roar thanks to the rubbers' sporty profiles and the accompanying, AMG specific Air Body Control suspension, but Comfort is exactly that.

A TURN OF SPEED

What is immediately apparent is the chassis revisions' effect on the steering. In any mode the AMG specific rack delivers consistent weighting and, finally for the latest generation of electro-mechanical systems, something genuinely approaching some feel. Indeed, initially it's not the stonking engine that dominates, rather that front axle - the quick turn-in response, the fine weighting of the system and that hint of feel through the chunky, flat bottomed wheel something of a revelation in these days of muted, artificial feeling and inconsistently weighted systems.

For the first few miles, the steering dominates the driving experience, imbuing the E63 with engagement even when you've not got the rev counter's needle swinging up to the redline and the


deliciously blaring accompaniment of the sports exhaust system.

Then there's the transmission, sometimes an AMG failing, the Speedshift MCT nine-speed automatic shifts with real speed, the number of

ratios such you quickly lose any idea of which ratio you're in and work it by ear. The engine's ability to lug from low revs in any gear does obviously help. That's fun, but the real joy is to be had wringing it out to maximum revs, the speed when doing so ferocious, backed by a chassis of real sophistication.

There's masses of traction, grip levels too being exceptionally high, while the way the AMG development of Air Body Control manages the body and wheel movements is revelatory. The ride, even in its firmest, most aggressive setting isn't jarring, the E63's ability to cope with difficult compressions, or ridges at speed taking some getting used to. Where the old E63 might have taken a second or two to sort itself out, the new car is resolute in its line, maintaining fine control, to the net gain of speed. The standard brakes stand up to some sustained abuse while retaining good pedal feel, but if you're going to be using them hard a lot of the time then the optional carbon ceramic stoppers are worth the extra outlay.

The E63's composure on the road makes exploiting its performance less risky. On track the numbers are bigger, the speeds higher, the more extreme settings bringing even sharper response, those engine mounts preventing unsettling movements and ensuring the car operates as a more cohesive whole.

It's a remarkable thing - its pace relentless. But that would be all for nothing without this level of agility, the new AMG E-Class more engaging and capable than any of its forbears. What don't I like about it? Honestly nothing, Bernd. It really is that good. 

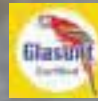


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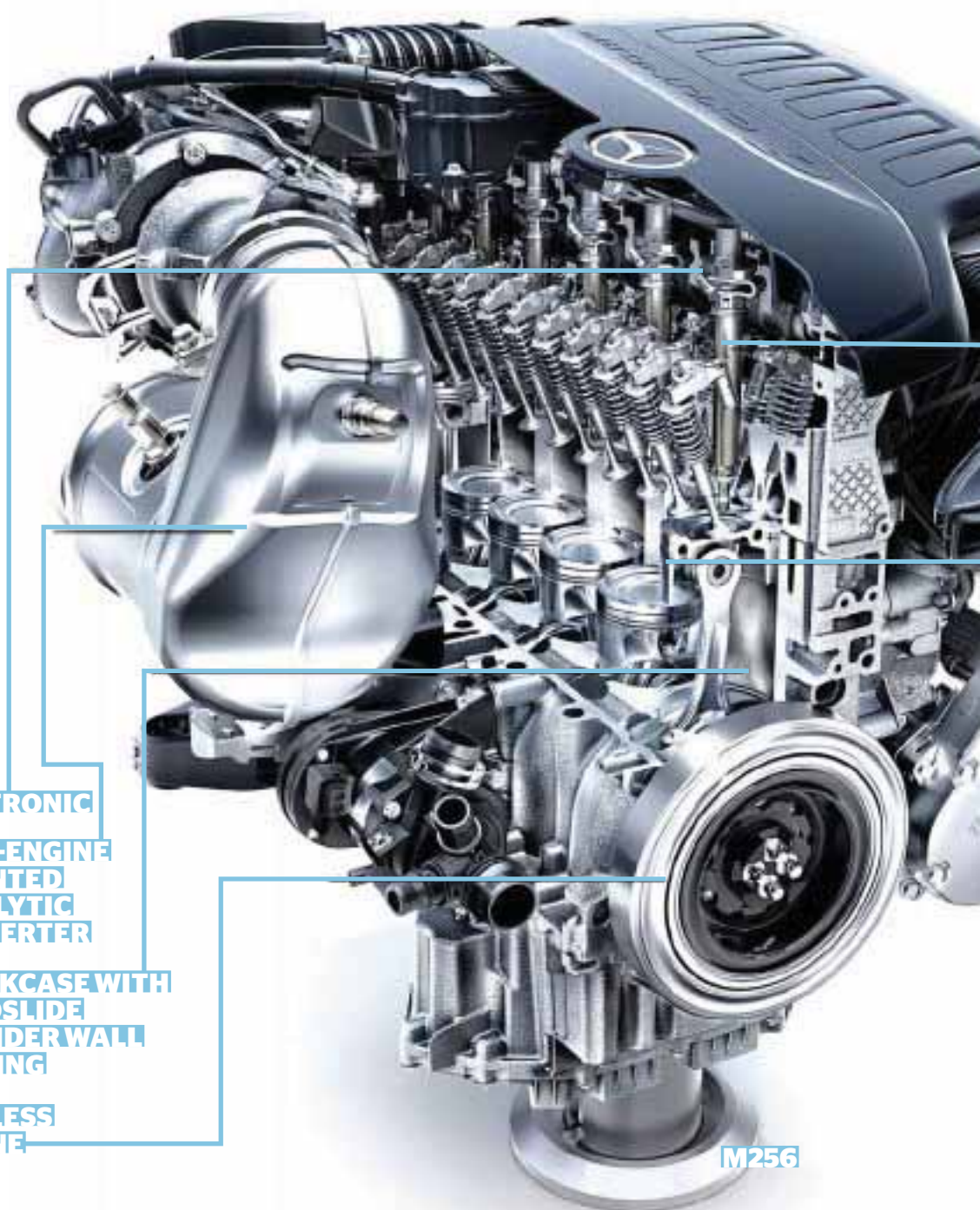
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M256



MERCEDES-BENZ ITSELF stated that its future is going to be electric, though for all the company's posturing there's some way to go. We're talking at least a

decade before new plug-in brand 'EQ' really takes hold, and even then sales will be relatively modest compared to conventional drivetrains at least. Ceasing development of internal combustion engines while chasing a plug-in future would be an exercise in futility, and, ultimately, a commercial disaster.

Which explains where we are today. Here, specifically being AIZ, Mercedes-Benz's new Powertrain Integration Centre in Sindelfingen. The €600m (£510m) facility boasts 10 state of the art test benches incorporating climatic chambers, simulated altitudes and even robotic refuelling. Able to test any type of powertrain, be it petrol, diesel, CNG, hybrid, fuel cell or electric it, says Mercedes-Benz Director of Gasoline and Hybrid Powertrain, Mario Mürwald, is the most sophisticated test facility of its type.

Impressive as it is, a quick tour around AIZ is simply a diversion before the main event – that being to witness the birth of a new family of modular engines in four-, six- and eight-cylinder forms, engines which will run in AIZ's chambers for many years to come. We've experienced one already – the two-litre, four-cylinder OM654 turbodiesel introduced with the latest 213-series E-Class.

PIEZO INJECTORS

Today its four siblings are being unveiled, Mercedes' new

high tech engines offensive a huge one, representing a €3bn (£2.5bn) investment for the company. They'll be rolled out in 2017, the facelifted S-Class being the first recipient, it gaining the latest development of the W213 E-Class's electronic architecture that allows both the latest autonomy features and the sophisticated engine control that the new powerplants require. Naturally, the new engines will be implemented across the entire range in time, but as they require Mercedes' latest operating systems it'll only be following wholesale model

COOLING DUCT PISTON

ELECTRIC AIR CONDITIONING COMPRESSOR



OM654

ENGINE REVOLUTION

That's not the case today. Of all the engines revealed, it's the in-line six-cylinder petrol that embraces the technological introductions so comprehensively. A three-litre unit, the M256 as it's internally designated (its new four-cylinder relation being the M264), has been systematically designed for electrification, it the first engine produced to do without ancillary belts for components, instead it using an as well Integrated Starter-Alternator (ISG) with as much as 14-20bhp assistance for mild hybrid functions like boost and energy recovery

(with around 80 per cent of braking energy able to be recuperated). The M256 also adopting an electric turbocharger, or in

The new engines will be rolled out in 2017, the revised S-Class being the first recipient

Mercedes-Benz parlance, an 'electric auxiliary compressor' (eZV), for in-fill boost at low revs.

This creates charge pressure irrespective of engine revs.

All that has been made possible thanks to the adoption of 48V electrics, it serving elements like water pumps and air conditioning compressors, as well as that ISG. The ISG itself allows a 15kW (20bhp) boost and is also responsible for idle speed control, aids in coasting and stop-start functionality. The net result of all the M256's advances is a 15 per cent improvement in economy over the M276 V6 that it will replace, combined with a significant boost in output, up from 328bhp to 402bhp, torque rising to over 369lb ft – that produced over the significant majority of the engine's range. Oliver Vollrath, Head of Powertrain Project M256, boldly proclaims it "a jewel of an engine."

That M256 offers V8 levels of power, allied to economy improvements, the new four-litre biturbo V8, designated



OM656



M264



M176



△ Real world testing with the S-Class's in-line six petrol unit.

△△ Fine tuning systems is all part of the process.

▷ M176 will replace the M278 4.7-litre V8, delivering more power, yet with economy improvements of around 10 per cent. The M176 is closely related to the M177/M178 AMG engines, sharing the central 'hot vee' location for its pair of turbos, which helps it produce 469bhp with 516lb ft of torque. Developed in Affalterbach, it achieves its lower consumption thanks to cylinder deactivation to reduce pumping losses, switching seamlessly to four cylinders when possible.

That cylinder shut-off system is managed by a variable cam 'Camtronic' valve timing system, the cylinder cut-off possible between 900 and 3,250rpm, provided the car is in Comfort or Eco mode via Drive Select. Above those engine speeds, and when more power is requested via the accelerator, cylinders 2, 3, 5 and 8 are re-instated in milliseconds, the only means the driver should know it's switching between modes should be via a notification in the instrument cluster. Electronic fuel injection is fully variable, allowing fuel pressure between 100 and 200bar, the on demand system ensuring a homogenous fuel-air mixture that benefits the combustion process and thermodynamic efficiency, with the obvious resultant improvement in emissions and economy. There's a particulate filter, too, Mercedes-Benz the first to roll out such fitments on petrol engines, the M256 also benefiting from this technology. Unlike its six-cylinder relation, the V8 runs conventional 12V electronics, and uses conventional alternator, refrigerant compressor and water pump, though they're all low friction drive to benefit economy.

SHARED TALENTS

All the engines feature Mercedes' patented Nanoslide cylinder wall coating for reduced friction, the new OM656, six-cylinder in-line turbodiesel seeing internal friction improvements of up to 50 per cent, thanks to both it and the combination of steel pistons and an all aluminium engine block. Its OM654 relation has already impressed us in the E-Class, the six-cylinder version of it essentially gaining a pair of cylinders, retaining the multi way exhaust gas recirculation and common-rail direct injection.

Despite power increasing to 309bhp and torque in excess of 479lb ft, the biturbo in-line motor drops CO₂ and particulate levels too, thanks to the use of its stepped crown combustion process and the close-to-engine exhaust gas after-treatment (both also present on the OM654) better enabled by the in-line configuration. It, says Mercedes-Benz, gives it the lowest

△ Mercedes has 10 high tech rigs for testing cars.

“**Mercedes-Benz's biggest investment in an engine line to date future-proofs its car range**

”

emissions in Real Driving Emissions tests, the close proximity of engine exhaust treatment meaning there's no need for engine temperature management during cold starting or low loads, benefiting economy and emissions on shorter journeys.

Around town is where the new M264 petrol four-cylinder will catch up with diesel efficiency. It's due to reach the model range in late 2017, Mercedes yet to confirm its actual output but Fritz Kreitmann, Head of Design and Validation M264, admits "it produces 100kw [134bhp] per litre, and achieves 10 to 15 per cent lower consumption." Kreitmann also admitting that smaller capacities will be offered in due course.

Essentially the same as the six-cylinder, the new four-cylinder motor does without some of its complexity, replacing the ISG with a belt driven starter-alternator (BSA) and retains the 48V electrical system, it powering the electric water pump which allows for improved intercooler cooling for cleaner, more efficient combustion. The BSA allows stop-start operation and in conjunction with the small lithium-ion battery (which all the 48V cars feature) aiding engine performance with a 13bhp boost up to 2,500rpm, the BSA recuperating energy during braking.

Camtronic features on the intake and there's twin-scroll turbocharging. The M264 also features plastic engine mounts and acoustic inserts for improved refinement. Like its six-cylinder relation, it's ready for hybridisation, Mercedes' biggest investment in an engine line to date future-proofing its car range for both forthcoming real world consumption regulations and the eventual creep of plug-in battery electric motoring.

That may be inevitable, but the new family of engines reveals there's a lot of life left in conventional internal combustion engines when some clever technology is applied to them.

▽ The facelifted S-Class goes on sale next year.



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Cover
story

NATURAL BEAUTY

Twenty-five years after Mercedes debuted its 124-series cabriolet, we head to the sunny south coast of England in a pristine E220 model

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



A maroon Mercedes-Benz 124 Cabriolet (convertible) is parked on a paved area next to a pebbly beach. The car's top is down, revealing tan leather seats and a red interior trim. The background features a calm blue sea under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. A large green quotation mark graphic is positioned to the right of the car, framing the text.

It was cold, but that doesn't matter when you're driving a 124 cabriolet, as Mercedes' engineers ensured it was fit for purpose



WINTER HAD officially arrived in the UK and the clocks had gone back. And so had we, in spirit at least, to the mid 1990s when the Mercedes-Benz 124-series proudly dominated Europe's middleweight quality car sector, as popular in the Frankfurt taxi ranks as it was in city business sectors and secluded suburbs. Even as it neared the end of its 13-year reign there was no sign of it wearying, or overstaying its welcome.

That was partly due to the sheer diversity of the range: saloon, estate, coupe and convertible models, and engines from two-litre four-cylinder to five-litre V8; six-litre if you count AMG's most ambitious, E60 reworking. Had Mercedes carried on building the 124, people would have probably kept on buying it, but a new and significantly modernised generation of Mercedes was waiting in the wings, the 210-series, and after a production run of over

2.7m the conservatively styled and much loved range bowed out.

The very last to go was the cabriolet, discontinued in July 1997, two years and a month after the saloon was retired, its extra life due to the absence of a 210-series convertible. It would be reborn as the CLK cabriolet, based on the C-Class rather than E-Class. And it was this last of the line, 'A124' model that was going to take us for an out-of-season, early winter's visit to the south coast of England. It was a trip I had looked forward to: I love visiting seaside towns once the candy floss toting legions have departed, leaving the places thinly populated, tranquil and with lots of parking spaces in the centre.

If even in high summer it pays not to expect much of the UK weather, you face very poor



odds of seeing the sun any time after late October, and should it make an appearance it will be gone by 4pm. But we were in luck, for our Wednesday was one of these rare beautiful, cloudless November days. It was cold, but that doesn't matter when you're driving a 124 cabriolet, as Mercedes-Benz engineers, as they always do, ensured it was fit for purpose.

The multi layered hood with its glass rear screen insulates and fits snugly when raised,



JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz E220 Cabriolet (A124)

ENGINE M111
2,199cc 4-cyl

POWER 148bhp
@5,500rpm

TORQUE 155lb ft
@4,000rpm

TRANSMISSION
4-speed auto,
RWD

WEIGHT 1,640kg

0-62MPH
12.4sec

TOP SPEED
127mph

FUEL
CONSUMPTION
24.6mpg

YEARS PRODUCED
1993-1997

*Figures for car as
pictured; fuel
consumption
according to EEC
urban*



◀◀ Multi link rear suspension a big blessing.

◀▽ The 124 cabrio never received a V8.

◀ Same length as coupe, but much heavier.

▽ Roof system relies on some driver effort.



Included in the new price of around £43,000 were alloy wheels, four-speed automatic gearbox and leather seats

and when it's lowered, the heater is easily powerful enough to keep the lower cabin warm, standard-fit, two-stage front seat heaters further adding to the sense of cosiness.

HOT PROPERTY

Indeed even though this particular example, borrowed with thanks from Hampshire classic Mercedes specialist Charles Ironside (www.charlesironside.co.uk/01420_520635), was the UK base model E220 Cabriolet, its late, 1996 manufacture saw it well equipped. Included in the new price of around £43,000 were alloy wheels, a four-speed automatic gearbox and leather seats; additionally this one has electric memory seats, air conditioning and a wood and leather steering wheel, piling £3,800 on the bill. Charles was asking £14,950 for the E220, this price reflecting the low, 53,000 miles covered and the excellent all round condition.

I recently drove the new S-Class cabriolet and was amazed at the silent lowering and raising of its hood. Things weren't quite so sophisticated when the A124 was introduced in September 1991 at the Frankfurt motor show. To lower the hood, you must first undo two catches at the top of the windscreen and push the front of the canvas skyward, then hold back a flashing red knob on the centre console to allow the electro-hydraulic motors to take over. Twenty-five seconds of whirring and bumping sees the hood folded back and swallowed up under the type of metal cover behind the rear seats that Mercedes-Benz first used on the SL Pagoda 53 years ago.

With the windows dropped the A124 boasts the graceful, uncluttered profile that Stuttgart's droptops have long been famous for, but the sizeable hood has to go somewhere. It takes up so much boot space that it was a squeeze getting all photographer Terry Osborne's bags and lights in. We headed off from Charles' place to pick up the A32 heading south, a road ideally suited to al fresco cruising. It's pretty, winding and not too fast, and sandwiched between two major routes, the A3 and A31, so isn't busy.

CALMING INFLUENCE

I had my seat heater on high, but soon reduced it to low when it became too warm, but what's delivered from under the bonnet isn't so hot. Mercedes' 16-valve, 2.2-litre, four-cylinder M111 engine makes 148bhp and 155lb ft torque, and that, with the E220 Cabriolet lugging 16 per cent more weight than the



SL320 Edition 2000X 19000 miles
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SL320 1998R 15000 miles!
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SL55 AMG 03/03 62000 miles
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SL320 v6 1999T 64,000 miles
Extremely rare colour combination magma red with helios. Panoramic roof, Xenons, Heated seats- £16995



SLK350 07/07 29800 miles
Designio Benoitte Blue, Cream Leather, Heated seats. Air scarf. Extended Walnut pack - £12995



SL350 (r230) 05/05 64000 miles
Rare colour with AMG bodykit, AMG alloys, Xenons wood & leather wheel, Heated seats - £12995

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1992 Mercedes-Benz 500SL £20,000

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1985 Mercedes-Benz 500SL £26,000

Thistle Green with Olive sports check. A/C & cruise control. 67k miles with Full Service History, books & manuals. £15k recently invested in refurbishment.

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▷ same model coupe, doesn't produce fireworks. I can see why Mercedes-Benz never offered the E200 (134bhp/140lb torque) in the UK. But that was how Mercedes did things two decades ago, and there was clearly not widespread customer dissatisfaction, the E200 and E220 outselling the six-cylinder E320.

E220 performance aside, the way the A124 looks after you is wonderful. The electric seats are infinitely adjustable for position via the seat-shaped switch on the door, and the unmarked tan leather is gorgeous. And I love the part wood rimmed steering wheel, which I've never seen before on a four-cylinder 124. This one has a few hair line cracks on the wood portion, but it's barely noticeable and if this was my car I'd live with it rather than pay £1,805 to Mercedes-Benz for a new one (it's still available).

To minimise the wind buffeting, it's best to keep the four windows up, and this allows normal conversation up to about 50mph. Mercedes, incidentally, still supplies a wind break for the A124, but at £985 you might be happy to settle for one from accessories specialist Classic Additions at £145.

We headed south to the coastal town of Gosport, which along with Portsmouth on the other side of the harbour, is known to all for its navel base, and then on to Lee-on-the-Solent, known to a lesser number of people for its hovercraft museum. Rising on an air cushion, these vast, propellered vessels once offered the fastest English Channel crossing, but were killed off by the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994, and now sit decaying in a locked yard. It's always sad to see redundant technology, I feel.

SEA CHANGE

Parked up, the E220 Cabriolet in its lovely Almandine Red metallic hue attracts plenty of admiring comments. And it's hard to not be taken with its understated elegance: no plastic body extensions, and a wheel design of a mere 15-inch diameter that does not aggressively show off big brake calipers.

▽ A slightly more athletic feel than the SL.

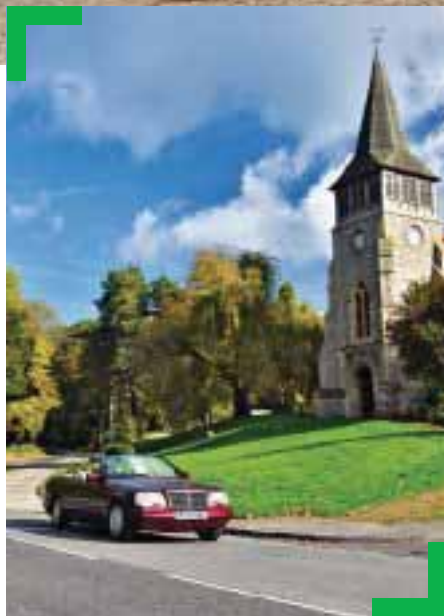


How the A124 evolved

When Mercedes launched the 124-series droptop it was offered in just one, upmarket guise, the three-litre 300CE-24 Cabriolet, available with a then new five-speed automatic gearbox. This is a rare model, most early A124s the 320CE introduced in October 1992, using a 3.2-litre development of the 300CE-24's multi valve M104 engine, and producing 217bhp/229lb ft torque.

In June 1993 the whole 124 range was facelifted and rebadged with an 'E' prefix, the 320CE becoming the E320. These cars are identified by the star badge being mounted on the bonnet, not the grille (collectors now call the pre facelift cars 'big grille' 124-series). At this point the A124 range was extended to include the E200 and E220, and also the Affalterbach engineered E36 AMG with 268bhp/284lb ft, built in very small numbers.





◀ The car looks good against any backdrop.

At the time, the 124-series cabriolet was the pinnacle of refinement in convertibles, more so than the R129 SL roadster

▷ By the time Terry's photography was finished, the sun and light were fading fast, and we'd had enough fresh air for one day, so it was time to raise the fabric hood and treat the car as a coupe. At the time, the 124-series cabriolet was the pinnacle of refinement in convertibles, more so than the R129 SL roadster that had been launched only two and a half years earlier and which had a plastic rear window and partially exposed hood frame inside the cabin. There is

some wind noise, but overall the A124 still impresses in this respect, and feels more than refined enough for all-year-round transport.

MODERN CLASSIC STATUS

The A124 is a gem: interesting, great for sunny summer days (and also for sunny winter days), modern enough to serve as everyday transport, and still affordable. But judging by the market, that last benefit may not endure.

A124 The inside story

Frank Knothe, former Head of Overall Vehicle Development at Mercedes-Benz, worked on the convertible 124-series in the late 1980s and reveals that Porsche helped develop it

When did the 124-series project begin?

The first thoughts on the development of a cabriolet were in the early times of the W201, the first model with a cabriolet prototype for testing purposes. But no decision was made to start production of a cabriolet – this was made later, for the 124, between 1988 and 1989.

What changed between the 123- and 124-series models to make a cabriolet version viable for the latter?

Deriving a cabriolet from the 123-series coupe would have been technically possible. But I guess that due to market and capacity reasons, this decision was never taken.

How many engineers worked on the A124 project?

There was already an existing team at Mercedes-Benz who worked together before the A124 project and also afterwards. Mercedes-Benz had the project lead and production was undertaken at Mercedes-Benz, but some of the necessary changes to the car were made at Porsche Engineering. So it is impossible to name an exact number of engineers.

Was consideration given to a folding metal roof?

Producing a folding metal roof was not an option, the time wasn't ripe. The R129 SL also had a textile folding top, and there was the fact that the cabriolet

was based on the 124 coupe, meaning there would have been a massive intervention into the rear end of the car, with a huge impact on storage volume, components and design. We thought that couldn't be the solution, and even the successor, the A208, had a textile top.

Was there a conflict between body strengthening and minimising weight increase?

There is always a conflict between weight and structural strength, torsion and bending stiffness, and the crash characteristics of a car, especially rollover protection. Things get very complicated if you try to implement a specification that the car should have the same weight as before. To achieve an appropriate form, which means safety for occupants, we had to

work with reinforcements, thicker sheet thickness and high strength metal.

Can you say more about the four vibration absorbers in the left damper, roof frame and boot?

These absorbers are spring-mass systems which are calibrated on a critical frequency of parts or systems, reducing their maximum amplitude. The vibration absorbers were installed in the A124 to reduce vibrations from the roof frame, the torsion and bending vibrations, helping achieve a high level of driving refinement.

During development, how many 124 cabriolets did Mercedes expect to sell?

The expected sales quantities were topped by the near 34,000 units produced and sold.



CHARLES IRONSIDE

SPECIALISTS IN MERCEDES-BENZ CARS

Alton, Hampshire, UK (40 mins from J10 M25)



300 SL, 1989G, 4-speed auto, 32,000 miles, FMBSH & just serviced, Signal Red, cream beige cloth, black soft top, factory fitted hard top, rear seats, cruise, OTG, illuminated vanity mirrors. This 107-series SL is as perfect as can be! **£39,950**



300 SL, 1990G, 3 owners, 86,000 miles, FMBSH, Astral Silver, grey leather, black soft top, factory fitted pearl grey hard top, heated seats, rear seats, otg, cruise, illuminated vanity mirrors etc. One of very few cars registered in 1990. Very nice **£29,950**



E320 Coupe, 1995N, 3 owners, 4-speed auto, only 19,000 miles, FMBSH, Azurite Blue metallic, mushroom leather, factory aircon, electric sunroof, sports chassis, headlamp wash/wipe, infrared locking, otg. The best available **£24,950**



280 CE Coupe (123-series), 1984B, 3 owners, 4-speed auto, 36,000 miles, FMBSH, Diamond Blue metallic, navy leather, Becker Europa radio/cassette. Probably one of the best 123 Coupes in the UK. Simply gorgeous **£19,950**



E320 AMG Cabriolet, 1996P, 5-spd auto, 67,000 miles, FMBSH, Brilliant Silver metallic, black leather, electric black soft top, factory aircon, cruise, sports chassis, electric heated memory seats with full lumbar support both sides, ASR, twin airbags, heated seats **£19,950**



SL 500, 1999T, 5-speed auto, 59,000 miles, FMBSH, Azurite Blue met, mushroom leather, elec navy soft top, glass panoramic hard top, climate, cruise, ASR, wood/leather steering wheel, rear seats, Xenons, headlamp wash/wipe, Becker radio & 6 CD Changer etc .. **£19,950**



420 SEC, 1991H, 4-speed auto, 4 owners, 75,000 miles, FMBSH, big overhaul just completed, blue/black metallic, grey leather, aircon, cruise, electric steering column, electric sunroof/rear sunblind/heated memory seats, ASR, etc. A gorgeous late 126-series coupe **£19,950**



G-Wagen 300 GES, 1990H, 5-spd manual, 51,000 miles, FMBSH, Brilliant Silver, black leather, electric sunroof, heated seats, otg, headlamp washers. One of the cleanest SWB G-Wagens in the UK **£19,950**



230 CE, 1984B, 4-speed auto, 103,000 miles, FMBSH & just serviced, Signal Red, beige leather, electric sunroof, front & rear e/windows. A very well cared for 123-series Coupe. Registration number included in sale **£14,950**



300SL, 1992J, 4-speed auto, 34,000 miles, FMBSH, Brilliant Silver metallic, navy leather, electric navy soft top, factory fitted hard top, factory air con, cruise, electric steering column, electric seats, driver's airbag. A gorgeous low mileage early 129-series SL **£14,950**



S420, 2 owners, 5-speed auto, 50,000 miles, FMBSH, Brilliant Silver metallic, black velour, climate, cruise, electric steering column, electric sunroof, electric heated memory seats, ASR, soft closing doors & boot, headlamp wash/wipe etc etc. An unmarked example **£8,950**



E240 Estate, 1999T, 5-speed auto, 149,000 miles, FMBSH, Azurite Blue metallic, mushroom leather, aircon, cruise, e/sunroof, 7 seats and retractable door mirrors, ASR, headlamp washers, anti-dazzle rear view mirror etc. A nice well maintained unrusty 210-series **£4,950**

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☞ This is the automotive equivalent of Opium's billboard advert featuring Sophie Dahl ☞



Based in the Netherlands, E&R Classics specialises in the weird and the downright wonderful cars from yesteryear – company boss Ernest Praag shows us round the impressive sales and workshop facilities

WORDS KYLE MOLYNEUX IMAGES CRAIG PUSEY

E&R



△ Ernest Praag represents the 'E' of E&R Classics and has turned his passion for old cars into a career.

“THIS BUILDING WAS ACTUALLY made for Mercedes-Benz in 2007,” begins Ernest Praag, joint founder of E&R Classics in the Netherlands. “The dealership was sold at the end of 2011 and we came here at the beginning of 2014. It is a very beautiful building for a classic car company.”

He's not joking. Based in Waalwijk, a small town 40 miles south east of Rotterdam, the premises spreads over two levels, with enormous glass windows displaying cars to the world. Given the sheer calibre of distracting exotica on display, it's a small wonder there aren't traffic accidents outside the building on a daily basis. This is the automotive equivalent of Opium's billboard advertisement featuring Sophie Dahl.

“I'm 49 years old, and have a wife and two children – my wife Maartje works for the company,” Praag continues. “At college I did commercial training and then I started working at a mail order company as a partner before selling my shares in 2006. Classic cars were always my hobby from a young age, and they were something I wanted to invest more time in.”

Can Praag blame his father for that disposition, as is often the case? “No – I don't know where my passion for cars came



CLASSICS

from, actually. Both my parents wanted nothing to do with them, so I don't know how it happened!

"We started very small in 2008 with my friend Ron Donders [who represents the 'R' of E&R Classics]. We had a workshop, a sales business, and also a wedding car rental operation. The wedding car hire actually came first and was my wife's company. It did very well and offered classic British cars such as Rolls-Royces and Bentleys. For us, it was more of a test to see which aspect would do best.

"After two years, it became clear that the workshop was not a sustainable business on its own – classic cars drive so little that they don't really need maintenance on a regular basis. The wedding car hire company did well, and so did the sales part, but I decided to continue just with the latter – focusing on two ventures at once was out of the question. So at that point we decided to sell the wedding car rental company, but keep the workshop – from that point it would only serve our sales. That is still the case today."

The year 2008 was tough for most businesses, given that the global economy went into meltdown. Did that stunt the growth of Praag's operation at all? "It is very difficult to say, because I had no experience in classic car sales before 2008.

Despite that, we kept growing. From the sales we have now, around 75 per cent of interest comes from foreign countries. We sell cars to customers in the United States, Saudi Arabia and so on. Some to people in the UK, too."

But what about supply? Does Praag have any special ways of finding new stock? "There is no secret to finding cars, it just takes hard work. We have two employees based here who are dedicated to sourcing and buying cars for us to sell. I also have a guy in the south of France, and one in California. Every week we have 40 to 50 cars offered to us, and we take one, maybe two each time. The problem is not selling these cars, the problem is finding cars of the right quality. It's getting more and more difficult to find them, because during the last 10 years a lot of classic cars have been exported from the Netherlands to other countries. The number of cars left here is going down, down, down every year. It's a shame but it happens."

It doesn't need a rocket scientist to observe that demand for classic cars is growing exponentially. "This is partly due to what I call 'new countries'," Praag offers. "More and more interest in our cars is coming from the Czech Republic, Hungary and ►

▷ Poland. In the old days, those sorts of countries didn't have these types of cars, but now their economies are doing better and the interest in classic cars is increasing. It is always the same thing when a country is 'growing up': the really rich people want to have the likes of the Bugatti Veyron and the newest Mercedes. But when cars like that become more common, the wealthy people want something different that nobody else has, and that's when they come to the classics. I think this will happen in China quite soon.

"The majority of cars we sell are left-hand drive due to customer demand. We do have some right-hand drive cars, but most of the time that is because the car was built only that way. We mainly buy parts for British cars from the UK, obviously. That said, we don't sell parts; we don't actively offer workshop repairs. We let other people do that. Of

on a mainland, and was one of the first countries to have an interest in classic cars, so there are more of them around. The country has a long history with older cars. People here were using classic cars 30 years ago as a hobby. When you look at Germany, Belgium or France, the interest in classic cars has only got really serious in the last 10 years or so. Before that, classics were just seen as old cars."

So how does Praag and his team go about choosing which cars to buy and then sell? "My problem as an enthusiast is that, of course I know the Porsches and the Mercedes, but when I see something rare and interesting I want to buy it regardless of the business case. The Crosley HotShot Roadster upstairs is one of the strangest cars you will ever see, but I wanted it because it was so unusual! However, I am not the kind of person who wants to buy a car and keep it, which is probably an advantage to me doing what I do here."



course, if someone buys a car from us, we will offer to do the maintenance. We are already fully loaded with work at both sites." Ah ha, so there are two sites? "Yes, we have two workshops – 40 mechanics work in the one here, and we own another one in Poland."

The site in Poland was acquired to provide a place of work for three long time employees of E&R Classics who wished to return home but did not want to lose their jobs. The idea appealed to Praag for three reasons. The first was, inevitably, cheaper rates of labour. The second was because technical knowledge in the country is very good. And the third reason was that he knew he could rely on these workers to produce the quality of work he wanted. "We started there on January 1 2016 and we now have 15 people working there, but they are only there to work on our cars. We will grow that part of the business to employ 25 people, but then we will stop," Praag affirms.

To say E&R Classics is a big operation would be something of an understatement. But let's talk more about the classic car market – how do prices in the Netherlands compare with those in the UK? "I think it's less expensive to buy a classic car here," Praag reckons. "The reason for that is because the Netherlands is



△ More affordable cars like this 280SL can be found on the 2nd floor.

△ Praag loves the 190SL's looks, but prefers a W113's drive.

The subject of originality is of great importance to anyone with an interest in classic cars. But it must be hard for E&R Classics to decide which cars to keep as they are, and which cars to revive prior to going on sale, given the capabilities of its workshop facilities. "As a car lover, I go for originality. But as a businessman, I know most people want shiny and beautiful. We once had a 1957 190SL with original red paint, imported from the United States. It had never been welded. I decided that we should keep the car as it was, but make sure it ran and drove correctly. We put it up for sale as an original driver quality car. It got sold soon after – for full restoration. I was sad, but I cannot say, 'You cannot buy it!'"

"When the originality is too far gone, that's when restoration is OK, in my opinion. Of course, you have a lot of car collectors who want a good base car for restoration. The older a car is, the more desirable originality becomes," Praag continues. "Upstairs we have a 1939 Cadillac LaSalle – it's a very original car. Yes it has a few scratches, but that's what people love on a car of that age. When it comes to something younger like an R107 500SL, however, nobody really wants that. It is difficult to decide what to do with a car sometimes, but if it's from the 1970s, 80s or 90s, most people want shiny."

Of course, original and resplendent are not mutually exclusive, but then you really are talking mega money price tags. And that's one thing which stands out from our visit to E&R Classics – all its cars appear competitively priced. "We have talked about originality, but you can also talk about emotions. When we are sourcing cars to sell, we see lots of people who are really attached to their car and they have a certain price expectation. You or I might see a scratch, but that doesn't matter to the owner. They may have had the car for 30 years, and even been on holiday with it. You have to be careful how you deal with these things," Praag explains.

"One of the most emotional stories I have is about a man who had a Mercedes 230SL Pagoda. He called us to say he wanted to sell the car. I went to him myself and the car was good. He was 82 years old and when I asked why he was selling the car, he told me that his wife was ill and she could not go in the car with him anymore. He had to look after her all day, every day. I told him that we would take the car, but he made a point of saying goodbye to it because letting the car go represented the end of his freedom. It was a sad moment." ▷

☞ There is no secret to finding cars, it just takes hard work ☞



◁ An asking price of £160,000 didn't stop this 220A from selling.

△ An unregistered SLS AMG Coupe lurks behind a 220A Cabriolet.



This 1966 230SL manual was treated to a body-off restoration.



◁ The Anthracite Grey SL is one of the first cars that greets you.

△ 2.3-litre straight-six formerly served in the United States.



◀ Key to the operation is a bustling workshop full of classic experts.

▽ Cars that are sold await final checking in an area upstairs.



◀ 190SL boasts its original and now sweet operating Solex carbs.

▶ Although he's a fan of the 190SL, Praag wishes it drove like the succeeding Pagoda. Perhaps like the one greeting you at reception. It is a 1966 230SL manual finished in stunning Anthracite Grey with a contrasting red leather interior. Its 1,600-hour, body-off restoration at the beginning of 2016 earned it top marks in Germany's car assessment system, the Pagoda's score of 1 normally reserved for brand new, unused vehicles. The price is €130,000 (£112,000), but Praag tells us this car would sell for much, much more at the Techno Classica event in Essen, Germany. Keen to gauge the changes in the classic car market, I ask what the price tag for this car would have been just five years ago. Praag's answer is around €100,000 or roughly £80,000. I can almost hear Pagoda owners rubbing their hands with glee...

Revisiting the subject of E&R's workshops, Praag reveals that the company does fully restore cars – mainly Jaguars – with only the paintwork done elsewhere (the site in Poland does that too). "We only sell finished cars with the guarantee of a warranty. The length of the warranty depends on the quality of the car, but it's six months or one year. Some might think it's unusual for a classic car dealer to offer a warranty, but it's important for our clients to be confident in what they're buying."

The process of preparing a car for sale at E&R Classics is rigorous to say the least, with any problems diagnosed at the start fixed before the vehicle even enters the showroom. And

☞ As a car lover, I go for originality – but as a businessman, I know most people want shiny and beautiful ☞

even when a car is sold, it undergoes a comprehensive 130-point check to make sure it's as close to perfect as possible for its new owner. "We take on all the worries, so the customer doesn't have to," Ron Donder says with a smile as he walks us round the workshop. One of eight children, he has worked on cars since he was seven years old. Formerly Praag's partner, Donder is now recognised as an employee of the company and is king of the workshop domain.

He leads me to a 190SL that had stood unused for three years. The company overhauled the brakes and heating system, and also put many hours into restoring the Solex carburettors. Ron scoffs at the idea of installing Webers instead, noting that although they are easier to work with, the Solex cars run much sweeter when correctly tuned. Next to the 190SL is a blue R107 SL, which has just been sold and is undergoing final checking.

For transporting cars short distances the company has three trucks at its disposal, and for longer distances E&R Classics uses recognised third party companies. Depending on the value of the car, customers may wish to choose closed transport instead of an open trailer. When it comes to vehicles that are being sent very far away, to the Middle East for example, they are shipped in a container from Rotterdam.

The E&R Classics operation is an expansive one, and very professional at that. It is ironic that this impressive building, which once sold new Mercedes-Benz cars, is witnessing a rebirth of demand in three-pointed stars built many moons ago.

▶ Thank you to E&R Classics in Waalwijk, the Netherlands
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On the run

WORDS CARSTEN HÖFINGHOFF

IMAGES RÉMIDARGESEN

Once owned by his father, this 300SL Gullwing had undergone quite a transformation when Thomas Rosier rediscovered it decades later





THERE ARE SPORTS CARS AND then there is the 300SL. As one of the most desirable classic cars in existence, the W198 Mercedes-Benz has achieved unique celebrity status, and Thomas Rosier of Rosier Classic Sterne in northern Germany can call a very special version his own.

By all accounts the 300SL is one of the most beautiful cars in history, a legend, a dream on four wheels. Premium level in all respects – a car that entranced New York when it was unveiled at the International Motor Sports Show in 1954. Born as a racing car, celebrities cruised the famous boulevards of the world in it. Mercedes-Benz made a statement at the right time and showed the world that Germany was still able to build motorcars with superior technology. Mere years after the unconditional surrender of

the Third Reich, the Swabians presented a car which symbolised the determination of a whole nation.

And what a start: in 1952 racing form, the 300SL won races such as the Carrera Panamericana and Le Mans. Two years later the road car followed, and no matter which manufacturer a person loved most the 300SL's beauty was universally applauded. In many ways this car was the epitome of Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder*, the economic miracle.

The 300SL's M198 engine was based on the 300 Adenauer's M186 motor, but enhanced with higher compression and fuel injection – the latter aspect a first for a Mercedes-Benz and helped to produce 212bhp at 5,800rpm. Peak torque of 203lb ft arrived at 4,600rpm – and by that time the engine really was roaring! The block was tilted 45 degrees to fit under the low bonnet line, and a dry sump lubrication system was added too.



▷△ Thomas Rosier of Rosier Classic Sterne.

▽ A hand made steering wheel; smaller mirror.



◁ Ostrich hide provides a unique twist.

△ Four-point belts for the bucket seats.



“Cutting edge design, motorsport pedigree and rarity make the 300SL a fascinating motorcar”



The Mercedes' form was unique. And taking into account that people in those days travelled at a maximum speed of 50mph, the speed of a 300SL was breathtaking – this coupe capable of up to 162mph depending on the rear axle ratio. It is this mixture of cutting edge design, motorsport pedigree and rarity (only 1,400 were made in under three years) which makes the 300SL a highly desirable and fascinating motorcar.

RACER FOR THE ROAD

Complete with an ostrich leather interior, Thomas Rosier calls his 300SL Gullwing the 'California Outlaw'. It was in 1927 when his grandfather laid the foundations of the Rosier Mercedes dealership. Thomas' father inherited a huge interest in cars – beyond the usual business. He purchased this 300SL in the USA in 1986, before selling it to a local customer three years later to fund Thomas' own business, a Mercedes-Benz dealership in Oldenburg, Germany. Decades later, at the end of 2014, Thomas was offered a black Gullwing... ➤

300SL defined
by its doors and
212bhp engine.



“

Arguably the most distinctive and beautiful modifications, however, are the bubbles in the door tops which form the roof area

”



△ Space had to be made for racing helmets.

<| Superb Rudge wheels, and side exiting exhaust.

▷ “I was stunned by the car’s grace. It was love at first sight,” he remembers. “But I had no idea that it was the very same car that my family owned previously.” One thing led to the other, a deal was done and a few weeks later, in early 2015, the 300SL Gullwing arrived in Oldenburg – delivered with the original numberplates used by his father. That was precisely the time when Thomas Rosier’s passion for classic cars reached a whole new level.

Apart from the connection to his family, what else about this SL fascinates Thomas? While in the US, the 300SL was rebuilt to the individual requirements of the previous owner for racing purposes, gifting it some very distinctive features. Most noticeable is the complementary contrast between the cognac coloured interior and the black body colour; the seats, dashboard and the racing roll bar are all covered with ostrich leather. The material’s texture may polarise enthusiasts, but the quality of craftsmanship is indisputable. Elsewhere, a handcrafted four-spoke steering wheel fits in perfectly with

the philosophy of competitive motoring, while the combination of 205/70VR15 tyres on black Rudge wheels enhances the sporting ambience further still.

UNIQUE DETAILS

The exterior is backed by a range of special equipment and systems under the bodywork. They guarantee a high degree of efficiency, dependability and safety, and comprise an aluminium fuel tank, an integrated fire extinguisher system, Koni sports suspension, an NSL motor racing clutch with hydraulic release bearing, a side exhaust system with temperature monitors, and a modified ignition system – all of which radically improve the characteristics of the car.

Arguably the most distinctive and beautiful modifications, however, are the bubbles in the door tops which form the roof area. Helmeted occupants would be restricted without them, as the previous owner also saw fit to lower the roofline by an incredible 80mm, while adding a small sports mirror on the



front wing, plus integrated foglights, and minimalist bumpers – all to re-emphasise the car's swooping shape.

And how does it drive? Sharp. Precise. Defined. No messing about. It drives as it should. It feels at home both on the 'Ring and country roads alike. Back in Oldenburg, this Gullwing is a symbol of what unites all employees in Rosier Classic Sterne: a sense of what makes cars unique. "We are passionately committed to restoring cars in a creative and innovative manner, and to a very high standard," says Thomas, whose company has achieved the rare certification of Mercedes-Benz Classic Partner and is thus one of only 10 in Germany.

▽ Roofline sits 80mm lower than standard.

Optimising the spatial and technical prerequisites, Thomas created a 1,200-square-foot, bright and modern workshop hall. Recognising the potential importance of a perfect infrastructure for restoration work, Thomas put almost all areas under one roof, including engine reconditioning apparatus and a body shop. Only saddlery and carpentry work are done by a third party. There is even an 800-square-foot warehouse stocked with new parts available for customers to buy through the company. Rosier Classic Sterne would not be complete without a successful sales operation, and the company will source cars for clients upon request. You could call that a full house.

► In 2011, Rosier Classic Sterne GmbH was recognised as a 'specialist for historic vehicles' by the German Association of the Automobile Industry. **Web** www.classic-sterne.de
Tel +49 (0)441 209 780-10



CAPACITY CROWD

WORDS
MATT ROBINSON
IMAGES
CRAIG PUSEY

With the R172 facelift, time was called on the short - but rich - AMG SLK range. So does the new SLC fit in with its ancestors, and can it convince any of our SLK AMG owners to swap?



AND SO, IN LESS THAN TWO decades, the Mercedes-Benz SLK AMG lineage comes to an end. Just three models make up the canon that has concluded due to Stuttgart's decision to neaten up its badging. Thus, the SLC is born out of the facelift of the 'R172' third generation car and there will be no more opportunities for Affalterbach to work its magic on the SLK.

Of course, we Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts aren't so easily fooled, and in this company, it's easy to see that the Mercedes-AMG SLC43 looks right at home. What we have here are examples of all of the newcomer's predecessors, starting with the super rare SLK32 AMG and running up to the pre facelift R172 SLK55 AMG. What we're hoping to do is ascertain two things: one, does the SLC43 feel like a neat continuation of the Mercedes performance roadster heritage? And two, would any of our SLK owners think about swapping their cars for an example of downsized performance machinery? ▷



“Does the SLC43 feel like a neat continuation of Affalterbach's performance roadster heritage?”

▷ Because that's what the Mercedes-AMG SLC43 is. Gone is the incredible, 5.5-litre M152 V8 of the R172 SLK55 AMG, replaced by the smallest capacity engine yet seen in a hot version of the compact roadster. It's the familiar, three-litre M276 biturbo, which is spreading to all kinds of Mercedes-AMG models, as well as seeing service in '400' badged models but with less power. Take one look at

the eco stats of all four cars assembled here and you'll understand why Mercedes has taken this decision, as the SLC's is the least thirsty and polluting motor of the group.

Where it's less clearly ahead of its ancestors in the performance stakes. Stacked up against the other V6 AMG, the SLK32, the SLC43 has gained 13bhp and 51lb ft, and half a second on the 0-62mph sprint – hardly huge progress for a

▽ SLK32 AMGs are now starting to climb in value.

▽▽ Mesmerising power from the suprcharged V6.

▽▽▽ Bordeaux leather lifts the compact cabin.

Nick Wilcock

(2003 SLK32 AMG)

“Nine gears help the SLC's fuel economy, and the ride comfort is excellent. I think the steering is good – nice and direct – and I like the design of the wheel, although the brightwork did distract me while driving. It's a very nice car, especially at low and medium speeds, but I wouldn't get rid of my SLK32 for it.”



decade and more's worth of development. It looks even less impressive when the two V8 SLKs rumble into view, as it's barely nosing ahead of the R171 model, and it's considerably in debt to the pre facelift R172: down to the tune of 53bhp, 15lb ft and a tenth of a second on the benchmark sprint. Not to mention 2.5 litres and a pair of cylinders.

Regardless, the SLC badge is what will be carried forward and now it's worth re-evaluating just how much of a game changer the original SLK was. When it appeared in concept form at the Paris motor show in 1994, its trick folding metal 'Vario-roof' was the eye-catching detail; other car makers might have dallied with the idea decades previously, but no one had genuinely made the technology work prior to Mercedes – cue other car makers copying Benz in the SLK's aftermath.





JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz SLK32 AMG (R170)

ENGINE M112 3,199cc
V6 supercharged
POWER 349bhp@6,100rpm
TORQUE 332lb ft@4,400rpm
TRANSMISSION 5-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,495kg
0-62MPH 5.2sec
TOP SPEED 155mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 25.2mpg
CO2 EMISSIONS 257g/km
YEARS PRODUCED 2001-2004



Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG (R171)

ENGINE M113 5,439cc V8
POWER 355bhp@5,750rpm
TORQUE 376lb ft@4,000rpm
TRANSMISSION 7-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,540kg
0-62MPH 4.9sec
TOP SPEED 155mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 23.5mpg
CO2 EMISSIONS 288g/km
YEARS PRODUCED 2004-2011



Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG (R172)

ENGINE M152 5,461cc V8
POWER 415bhp@6,800rpm
TORQUE 398lb ft@4,500rpm
TRANSMISSION 7-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,690kg
0-62MPH 4.6sec
TOP SPEED 155mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 33.6mpg
CO2 EMISSIONS 195g/km
YEARS PRODUCED 2012-2016



Russell Hodges (2007 SLK55 AMG)

“I’m impressed with the SLC43, but I wouldn’t swap mine – I’ve got a V8, after all! The SLC pushes you back in the seat a little bit under hard acceleration, whereas my car really pins you there. The SLC43 felt quite light in its responses too, especially over crests, and I don’t like the fact the brake pedal is higher than the accelerator. The SLC is very good for a V6, but it’s not for me.”

△ The designo Mystic paint looks stunning.

△▷ AMG sports seats and an AMG gearbox.

▷ 5.4-litre M113 V8 goes without a supercharger.

PRETTY AND PUNCHY

Launched two years after that jaw-dropping French debut, it was not until 2001 that AMG unveiled its SLK32, with 4,333 subsequently built. Even today, 20 years after it appeared, it’s clear that the R170 was a strikingly pretty roadster and it’s part of the reason Nick Wilcock, from Oxfordshire, wanted the SLK32 AMG. That and the rarity factor, as he says: “Only 271 right-hand drive models were built, and just 29 were sold in the UK in 2003.”

His car is one of them. It’s finished in silver, a classic SLK colour, with a designo Bordeaux red leather interior, and it still looks fantastic, those crisp triangular rear lights and the lack of fussy detailing serving the car well. It sits on 17-inch wheels with 225/45 front, 245/50 rear tyres and, unlike the other models assembled here, it doesn’t have quad exhaust pipes, instead making do with a neat pairing to the left of the rear valance.

Clambering aboard, the dash architecture is much more dated than the 03 plate might have you believe, but it’s all neatly laid out and the silver-white AMG dials are a nice touch. The steering wheel is a little plain, a four-spoke affair that looks like it would be equally at home in a C180, but by way of compensation you sit in a proper sports car’s driving position: way back, perched over the rear axle with the 32’s twin-straked nose stretching away in front of you. The cabin is more intimate than any of the other, larger cars here, yet for Nick there’s a practical consideration when choosing the R170: “With the roof up, it has the largest boot of any of the cars here.” ▷

Mercedes-AMG SLC43 (R172)

ENGINE M276 2,996cc V6 biturbo
POWER 362bhp @5,500-6,000rpm
TORQUE 383lb ft @2,000-4,200rpm
TRANSMISSION 9-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,595kg
0-62MPH 4.7sec
TOP SPEED 155mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 36.2mpg
CO2 EMISSIONS 178g/km
YEARS PRODUCED 2016-on

Figures for a 2003 SLK32, a 2007 (R171) SLK55, and a 2013 (R172) SLK55 as pictured; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined; top speeds electronically limited



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220SEb Coupe 1966D

Midnight Blue, pale grey leather, four speed column change auto, only two owners, latest since 1981, 48,000m believed genuine, fully restored and immaculate throughout **£39,950**



220SEb Coupe 1965C

Original colour scheme of Horizon Blue with Midnight Blue roof, light tan leather, four speed column change auto, fully restored and immaculate condition throughout **£39,950**



E320 Sportline Cabrio 1996P

Brilliant Silver metallic, dark blue leather, blue soft top, very high spec inc. air cond, cruise, airbags, elec seat, wood/leather steering wheel, original 15" alloys, FSH, 70,000m **£18,950**



E320 Cabriolet 1993L

Almandine Red metallic, Mushroom leather, black soft top, 5 speed auto, air cond, cruise, airbag, elec mem seats, leather steering wheel, original 15" alloys, FSH, 46,000m **£19,950**



E220 Coupe 1996N

Brilliant Silver metallic, dark blue leather, Sport Chassis, 4-Sp auto, elec driver's seat, elec sunroof, leather steering wheel, orig Sportline alloys, two owners, FSH, 78,000m . . . **£9,950**



300CE Coupe 1992K

Nautic Blue metallic, Mushroom leather, walnut wood, armrests, headrests, 4 speed auto, leather steering wheel, elec sunroof, original 8 hole alloys, FSH, 49,000m . . . **£13,950**



300E Saloon 1988F

Smoke Silver metallic, Cream/Beige cloth interior, zebrano wood, 4 speed auto, cruise, electric tilt/slide sunroof, original 15 hole alloys, radio/CD, two owners, FSH, 66,000m **£7,950**



280SL Roadster 1982X

Silver Blue metallic, matching hardtop, blue soft top, grey sport check interior, automatic gearbox, electric windows, rear seats, original steel wheels, FSH, 79,000m **£24,950**



S280 Saloon 1998S

Brilliant Silver metallic, Orion Grey leather, 5 speed auto, cruise, climate, electric seats, double glazing, electric sunroof, leather gearknob, airbags, original alloys, FSH, 73,000m . . **£7,950**

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SLK SLK55 AMG
2010 (60 Reg), 12,000 miles, automatic, 2 door, convertible, petrol **£27,995**



ML350 BlueTEC Sport
2012 (12 Reg), 26,000 miles, automatic, 5 door, estate, diesel **£25,995**



SLK SLK200 BlueEFFICIENCY Edition 125
2011 (11 Reg), 26,000 Miles, Automatic, 2 door, convertible, petrol **£15,995**



E350 CDI BlueEFFICIENCY Sport
2011 (11 Reg), 52,000 Miles, Automatic, 4 door, Saloon, Diesel **£14,495**



E220 CDI BlueEFFICIENCY Avantgarde ED125
2011 (61 Reg), 68,000 Miles, Automatic, 5 door, Estate, Diesel **£13,995**



SLK 300 (Sports Pack)
2009 (59 Reg), 46,000 miles, automatic, 2 door, convertible, petrol **£11,995**



CLC CLASS CLC180 Kompressor Sport
2010 (10 Reg), 36,000 miles, automatic, 3 door, coupe, petrol **£9,995**



B180 CDI Sport
2009 (59 Reg), 13,000 miles, automatic, 5 door, MPV, diesel **£9,995**



E220 CDI Avantgarde
2008 (58 Reg), 53,000 miles, automatic, 4 door, saloon, diesel **£8,495**



E320 CDI ELEGANCE
2008 (08 Reg), 89,000 miles, automatic, 4 door, saloon, diesel **SOLD**

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▷ The performance data remains impressive now and when the SLK32 gets going, it definitely means business. The V6 has a gruffer, louder roar to it than the creamy powerplant in the SLC43, and there's more of an old fashioned surge of acceleration at high revs, rather than the modern trend towards a flat mid-range torque plateau, but there's no doubting this SLK is astonishingly rapid. The suspension feels softer than any other car here, although Nick felt differently about it when he first bought the car 11 years previously. "I thought the suspension box ticked was 'brutal' as the ride was very poor," he recalls. "As it's my daily driver, I've got used to it now but on rougher road surfaces it can be an issue."

THE EIGHT-CYLINDER ARRIVES

All told, the SLK32 AMG is an appreciating classic: rare, an originator of its species and yet still competitively quick in 2016. The two V8s, though, kick really hard and it's only the multitude of ratios in the gearbox plus its wide torque band that allow the SLC43 to keep pace with the 5.5-litre SLKs. Russell Hodges, a Nottingham resident, owns the Northern Irish-registered R171 and – as with all the other owners here – this is his first AMG. Indeed, along with Ian Checkley, this is his first Mercedes; quite a way into marque ownership.

"I went to look at a Porsche Boxster, but I didn't know which way it was supposed to be pointing, and the interior looked like something out of a 70s Nissan," Russ chuckles. "The cabin on mine's little different to a regular R171's – but then I do have a 5.5-litre V8..."

It's that mighty engine that sold Russ on this very late 2007 model, which he picked up in

Ian Checkley

(2013 SLK55 AMG)

“Do you know what? I think the SLC43 is wonderful. I was worried that it would feel slow compared to my 55, but it accelerates incredibly quickly. It's energetic in the way it performs, whereas my SLK55 is more laid back. I wouldn't switch for the SLC right now, as it's out of my price range, but in three years time when it has depreciated a little? I'd definitely consider it.”



January 2015. "I looked at a lot of 'pristine' rubbish when searching for this car, but eventually I found it in Kent, having been shipped over from Belfast where it was first sold. It's as close to standard as possible, and I've only done 10,000 miles in it – I have a company car for daily use and this is basically my new motorbike. I just love the V8 noise, the everyday usability; it's a modern classic."

Nothing classic about the way the R171 SLK55 AMG picks up pace, though. It is stonkingly quick, with an absolutely fabulous exhaust note during hard acceleration. The body control is magnificent without causing a shockingly firm ride, and Russ notes that the steering is more feelsome on his older car than on the SLC43, which uses an electro-mechanical system. The brakes, too, deserve special mention – six-pot calipers front, four-pot rears, they bite with venom.

No doubt about it, the R171 feels a marked step on from the R170, and even quicker than its 4.9-second 0-62mph time suggests. Perhaps the biggest obstacle to owning one is whether you like the styling or not, as the F1 inspired nose and flared arches make it a standout machine among its relatives.

A FINAL TWIST

Which brings us to Ian's stealthy black and de-badged, 415bhp R172 SLK55, the most powerful road going SLK yet built (R171 Black Series included). And he's in the honeymoon period, as aptly demonstrated by his huge grin, echoed by his son Sam who accompanies him on the shoot. "I only bought the car three weeks ago. I was coerced into buying it by Sam, who works for a Mercedes dealership, ▷



△ Characterful V8 with cylinder shut-off system.

◁ Cabin a big step forward from the R171's.

▷ The last car to have four oval exhaust pipes.





Optional AMG Ride Control suspension adds adaptive and adjustable damping.

▷ and I took one drive in it and knew I had to have it. I had to make the numbers work, but it's just that sort of 'OMG' car."

Despite the V8's clever four-cylinder mode, Ian is still getting used to the fuel consumption, having migrated to the 55 from a performance diesel "capable of 40 to 50mpg". But apart from regular trips to the fuel station, he's smitten. "It's the sound of the exhaust, the noise of the engine, the sheer brute force of the acceleration – it's intoxicating," he explains.

Despite the fact they're both normally aspirated V8s, there are subtle differences to both the idle sound and the high revs roar of the M113 and the M152 respectively; it's a tough call, but we just prefer the noise of the later engine because it spins up a little further than the M113 – sorry, Russ!

However, both SLK55 AMGs are extremely similar in terms of the phenomenal straight line go, and generally excellent road holding. There's slightly less float on the later 55 than the R171, the body settling on its springs faster in the wake of big compressions, but otherwise it's the familiar story: epic noise, monster go, wind-in-your-hair exhilaration. The SLK, in all its AMG guises, is a truly marvellous two seater.

DETAILS THAT MATTER

So, how about the newbie? The general consensus of our SLK owners is that the SLC's strong points are its panoramic roof (a £410 option) and that it has a tidy appearance, save for a few details. Nick opines: "The front end looks too cluttered and I really don't like [optional] black door mirrors on a blue car – it looks base spec."

Russ really isn't fussed by it at all, while pre facelift R172 owner Ian adds: "I like the new front lights and the stubby SLC gearlever inside, but the rest of the interior is very similar and that chrome grille... oh dear." Indeed, it's the grille of the SLC that draws the most ire from our SLK owners throughout the day, although there are



△ V6 biturbo sounds great and is lighter than the old V8s.

“We'll happily admit that we love the SLC43 – the V6 and gearbox are tremendous”

mutters of discontent when the 43's bonnet is popped and the red striped engine cover is bereft of the signature of its builder; the M276 is not a pure, hand built AMG engine, you see, unlike the other three units here.



△ Extensive use of high quality materials set the latest cabin apart from the rest.



△ Specially developed axles, and stiffer mounts for the engine and gearbox.

Nevertheless, we'll happily admit that we love the SLC43. When we first drove it overseas, it felt fun but overly noisy, and harsh in the ride department; back here in the UK, it comes across as a much more cohesive performance car. The engine and nine-speed gearbox are tremendous, and it can easily access its reserves of power and torque in the dry with little unruly behaviour, thanks to suspension that feels far more supple than it did previously. Inside, subtle details have been tidied up in the facelift, such as the digital displays in the instrument cluster, the climate control switchgear and that aforementioned tiny shifter, but otherwise this is as-you-were.

At £46,360, the SLC43 is a good deal cheaper than the R172 SLK55 was when new in 2012 (£54,965), but this particular car has £10,405 of options, bringing the final ticket to £56,765. Even so, that compares well, inflation adjusted, to the £45,615 a non designo SLK32 AMG would have set you back in 2003. If there are issues with the SLC, it's that there's a little more flex in the structure than we'd really like from a performance machine, and we'd ideally want a touch more feel at the gorgeous Alcantara wrapped steering wheel, but otherwise this is an impressive product from Affalterbach, and one of the most enjoyable roadsters of the moment.

UNRIVALLED

So, in answering our two questions posed at the outset of this piece, firstly we have to say the SLC43 doesn't feel lost in this company. It is a fine standard bearer for the reputation the SLK AMG models have built up, and we reckon the Mercedes is top of the compact premium roadster pile, thanks to rivals abandoning six-cylinders. What do the SLK owners think of it? Read the separate boxes to find out...

► Thank you to the **SLK World** forum for its invaluable assistance with this feature
Web www.slkworld.com

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Mercedes-Benz 300SL Sports £44,750

1989, finished in Almandine Red with Dove Grey hide interior, rear seats, headrests, overmats, stereo system, hard and soft tops, automatic, power steering, power windows, tinted glass, alloys, ABS brakes, light-up vanity mirrors, complete with all tools, garaged from new, one of the last in this model, drives like new, only 51,000 miles with full history, plus old MOTs and handbook very difficult to find better, and a fine investment.

1987, finished in Champagne Gold with luxurious brown hide interior, headrests, rear seats, Blaupunkt stereo system, ABS brakes, alloys, hard and soft tops, automatic, power steering, power windows, tinted glass, personal reg number, full service history from new, even the original wallet that holds the history is like new with all the original paperwork, plus many invoices, almost every MOT, garaged from new, recent service.



Mercedes-Benz 300SL Sports £27,500



Mercedes-Benz 230SL Sports Pagoda £87,750

1966, in striking original brilliant Brunswick Green with complimented new deep red carpets and seats, rear seat, new soft top/hard top, radio cassette, rare four spd, only used on high days and holidays, only 42,000 miles, two owners, garaged from new, lots of history, handbook, all tools, thousands spent over the years to keep this car in superb condition, personal registration number to go with car. Just stunning.



Mercedes-Benz 280SL Sports Pagoda £129,500

1968/9, finished in unmarked gleaming silver with as new soft black hide interior, hard and soft tops, automatic, p/steering, stereo system, Mercedes overmats, only 73,000 miles £1000s spent to keep this garaged kept sports car in magnificent condition. Folder of invoices/old MOTs/original handbook, all tools. A breathtaking example. More pictures available on our website.



Mercedes-Benz 250SL Sports Pagoda £139,500

1968, finished in the breathtaking colour scheme of light silver blue with darker blue hard & soft tops, light beige hide interior and carpets, with overmats. Auto, p/steering, CD stereo system, full tool kit, lots of old MOTs/history & invoices, handbook, looks like new. Drives superb, garaged. Remarkable car. See our website for more detailed pictures you will be amazed. Fantastic investment and fast appreciating in value don't miss.



Mercedes-Benz 280SL Sports Pagoda £135,750

1968, brilliant Artic White, superb contrasting interior, hard and soft tops, auto, PAS, CD stereo system. One of the finest having had thousands spent through its life, and only used on summer days, only 58,000 miles, supplied with original handbook, etc. It would be very difficult to find another even come close to this.



Mercedes-Benz Vito 111 CDI LWB £12,750

2006, mini bus, 7 seater, wheelchair access, very unique vehicle, finished in black with like new interior, automatic, power steering, CD and stereo system, power windows, multi-function steering wheel, air conditioning, alloys, tinted glass, central locking, only 77,000 miles, original leather wallet with service book and handbook.



Mercedes-Benz 230SL Sport £89,750

1966, Porcelain White with as new Black hide interior, auto, PAS, CD stereo system, hard and soft tops, known to us for many years, original service books etc. Entered in many events in UK and Europe. Fitted stainless exhaust system, recent overhaul. Over £10,000 spent in the last few years making this car one of the finest.



Mercedes-Benz 560SL Sport £38,500

1988, left hand drive, finished in Impala, metallic colour-coded bumpers, 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.



Mercedes-Benz E280 Elegance £11,750

2000, 6 door limousine coach built by Binz, face lift model, black with superb hide interior, headrests all round, glass divider, veneer dashboard and door rails, automatic, power steering, cruise control, air conditioning, auto Tiptronic, parking sensors front and rear, alloys, only 65,000 miles, original wallet containing handbook and service details, excellent example.



Mercedes-Benz 560SL Sport £46,750

1987, left hand drive, gleaming Signal Red with Beige hide interior, headrests, centre arm rest, hard and soft tops, this flag ship SL has power windows, tinted glass, stereo system, light up vanity mirrors, cruise control, air-con, power mirrors, ABS, air-bags, alloys, over-mats, only 27,000 miles from new, with FSH, 1 owner, garaged and pampered.



Mercedes-Benz 300SL Sport £29,750

1988, personal reg number, finished in Diamond Blue with Dove Grey hide interior, headrests to front, power windows, hard and soft tops, light up vanity mirrors, alloy wheels like new with new tyres, automatic, power steering, original stereo, only three previous owners, with full history, garaged from new, drives like new, superb example.



Mercedes-Benz 300SL £9,750

1992, finished in Astral Silver with Dove Grey hide interior, rear seats, headrests, hard and soft tops, light up vanity mirrors, power windows, power hood, air bags, abs, alloys, stereo system, only 68,000 miles from new with full history, superb example.



Mercedes-Benz 560SL £39,750

1988, left-hand drive, Astral Silver, maroon hide interior, rear seats, hard and soft tops, cruise control, automatic, power steering, superb walnut veneers, air bags, SRS, air con, alloys, only two owners, only 39,000 miles, service history. Probably one of the finest models ever made, drives like new. More pictures of this wonderful car on our website.

CLASSICS ALWAYS WANTED

Tu



“Were this my 320E, I’m pretty sure every journey would involve a minor detour through a tunnel”

rb thrills



WHILE LIVING IN GERMANY, THIS
1992 320E VISITED LOTEC FOR A
TURBOCHARGER CONVERSION,
AND LATER DROPPED IN AT
AMG FOR SUSPENSION
MODIFICATIONS BEFORE
MAKING ITS WAY TO THE UK

WORDS & IMAGES ERIC RICHARDSON

“Following the engine modifications, Mr Kellermann took the car to then independent AMG in March 1994”



“TRUST ME, IT REALLY DOES GO WELL,” SAYS KRIS PETROV, owner of the Lotec 320E that I find myself driving. Keen to explore what the addition of a Garrett T03 turbocharger has done to this W124’s road manners, I slow the car to walking pace, select first on the dog leg gearbox (the same ZF unit that can be found on the 16-valve 190Es) and following a quick check in the mirror I stamp on the accelerator pedal and prepare for the turbo to kick in.

As the rev needle soars past 4,500rpm, by which time the speedo is nudging 80km/h (50mph), it quickly dawns on me that a massive, peaky punch of power won’t be coming. There is simply a linear and very refined delivery of the certified 317bhp – an improvement of 100bhp over a standard 320E. Sadly, Kris can’t say for sure how much extra torque the turbo offers, but we both agree there’s more than the standard 229lb ft at 3,750rpm.

I have merely glimpsed what the car is capable of, but Kris has a much better idea, having driven it home from Germany after buying it. “I’ve had it up to 220km/h [137mph] and there was still plenty of power left. I took it no higher mainly for my own personal safety, but also because I had my wife with me and she was not happy with me going at those sorts of speeds,” he explains. “The gentleman I bought it from told me that the car was TÜV [Technischer Überwachungsverein – Technical Inspection Association] approved in Germany up to 260km/h [162mph], but when it had TÜV approval it was

▷△ Dog leg manual ‘box; 0.5bar boost.

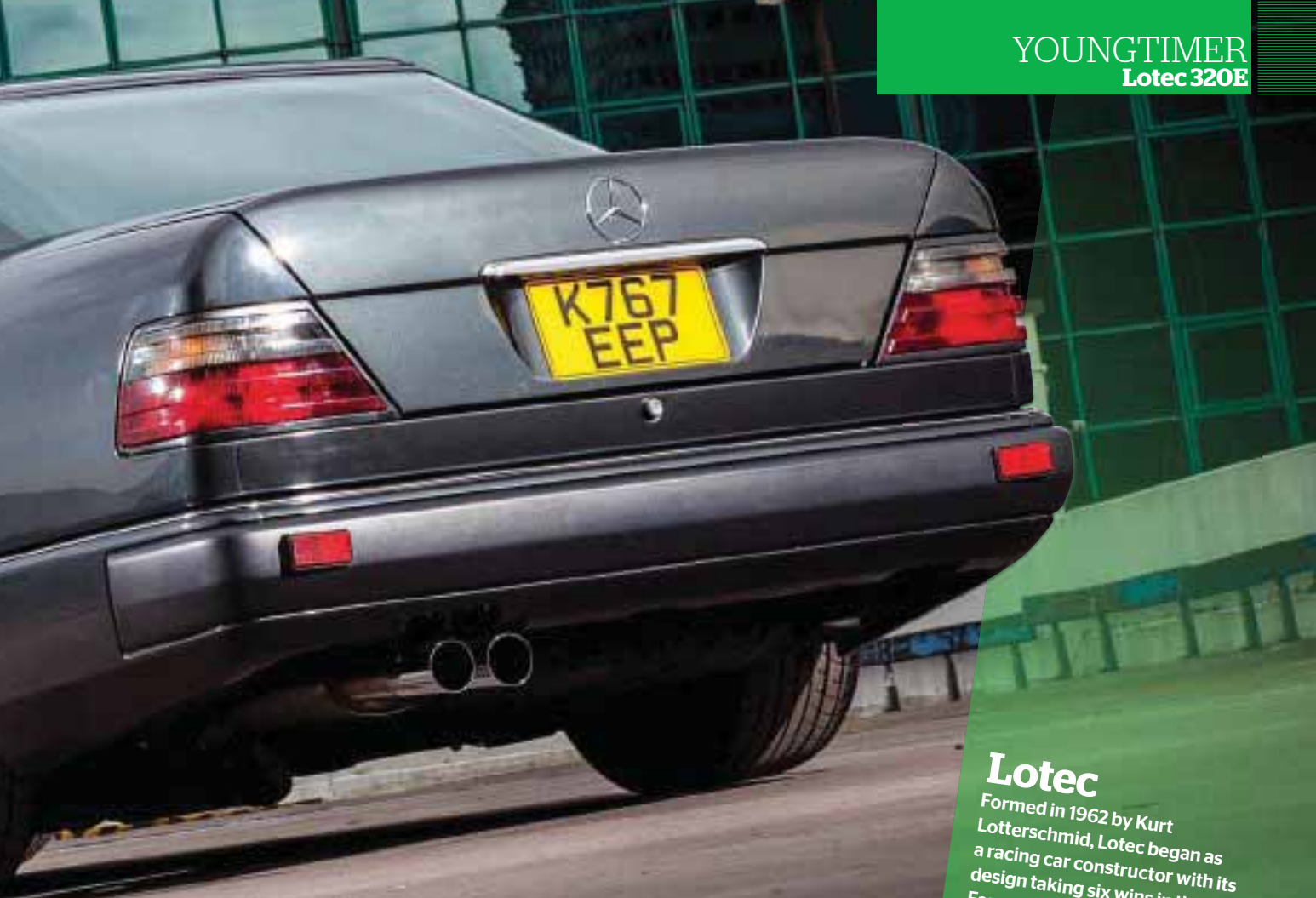
▷ Lotec name furnishes the speedometer.

with a standard Mercedes exhaust, but it now has a stainless steel sports exhaust fitted to it, which should be releasing a few more horses.”

The matter of the exhaust hadn’t gone unnoticed during my time behind the wheel. Dropping the window a little on our run, I was able to savour the purposeful sound emanating from the twin tailpipes, which give a statement of capability rather than simply seeking to attract attention. Addictive may be too strong a term, but were this my 320E, I’m pretty sure every journey would involve a minor detour through a tunnel or an underpass to savour those smile inducing sounds.

Leaving Sindelfingen on October 5 1992 and registered in early 1993, the 320E was bought by Fritz Kellermann of





Lotec

Formed in 1962 by Kurt Lotterschmid, Lotec began as a racing car constructor with its design taking six wins in the 1969 Formula V series. The year 1975 saw the company develop bodykits for Porsche models. Come 1990 and it had built the unique C1000 supercar for a customer in the UAE, a Mercedes V8 twin-turbo engined monster with 986bhp and a claimed top speed of 268mph (see our October 2014 issue). One year later, Lotec produced the Ambassador, which could be a tongue-in-cheek take on Mercedes' 300 'Adenauer'. In 2000, Lotec launched the Sirius, another supercar with Mercedes power at its heart, this time a V12 twin-turbo generating 1,183bhp.



Rothenburg in Germany, who shortly afterwards set about transforming of the car, handing it over to renowned German tuning company Lotec. The firm promptly fitted the Garrett T03 turbocharger along with the associated intercooler to Mercedes' M104 straight-six, a power unit that could be found in pretty much every model range that Mercedes

was producing in the early 1990s, such was the company's belief in its engineering make up. In addition to the turbocharger, you'll find a Lotec-Novotronic control box on the inner side front wing, which remaps the engine management system to ensure the changes to the fuelling, induction and extraction of exhaust gasses are catered for.

With the engine upgrade complete, the next step was to change the wheels, the original 6.5Jx15 front and 7Jx15 rear items replaced by 7.5Jx17 and 8.5Jx17 alloys respectively. As >

△ Gorgeous wood/leather Brabus wheel.

<△ Kris Petrov bought the car last September.

<<△ Paperwork confirms this 320E's tweaks.





“The car feels planted and solid, resolutely refusing to let any imperfections in the road’s surface reach occupants”

▷ is the requirement in Germany, even for a simple wheel swap the car then had to undergo TÜV assessment, the 320E gaining its certification on July 12 1993.

Following the engine modifications, Mr Kellermann took the car to then independent AMG in March 1994. The company stiffened and lowered the suspension, and fitted SP8000 tyres, size 235/40/17 up front and 255/40/17 at the rear. AMG also fitted wings from the 500E to accommodate the meatier road stance. At the same time, clear lens front indicators replaced the original orange items, and darker light lenses were added at the rear – all of which required further TÜV approval.

On the congested roads of south London, I did not expect to properly test the car’s suspension, but within five minutes I was seduced by just how well it was coping with the far from perfect roads. Granted there is a degree of road noise from those impressively sized tyres, but for the most part the car feels planted and solid, resolutely refusing to let any imperfections in the road’s surface reach occupants. Kris, of course, has a far better understanding of the car’s handling capabilities, saying that “it feels very secure and very comfortable.”

Whilst the upgrades were taking place, the owner fastidiously kept up with his annual Mercedes-Benz service



schedule, right up until he sold the car to his brother, Peter Kellermann, in September 1995, whereupon it received a new stainless steel exhaust, for which the car once again underwent TÜV approval. The 320E was then sold to its last owner before Kris, one Mr Juri who, despite keeping the Mercedes saloon garaged most of the time, had the engine rebuilt and

fitted a new set of Bridgestone tyres.

“I previously owned a W124 3.4 AMG, but I didn’t really get on with the automatic gearbox, so I sold it and started looking for something even faster – with a manual gearbox,” Kris remembers. “Someone told me about this Lotec tuned W124, so I had a look at it and really liked what I saw – the car was on a new set of Bridgestone tyres, I liked the exhaust sound, and how it sat on the road, so I bought it. That was back in September 2015, and I drove it straight home from Stuttgart via France. I really enjoyed that drive. It’s such a nice, fast car.”

► This car is for sale – contact **Kris Petrov**
Email k.petrov1@hotmail.co.uk

◁ AMG handling upgrades plus 500E arches.

TÜV

– an explanation

TÜV is an abbreviation of *Technischer Überwachungsverein* which translates as Technical Inspection Association. This is an umbrella name for a number of organisations that work to ensure that all types of products, not just motorcars, are safe for human beings and the environment, with many of the organisations responsible for the administration of International Standards Organisation certifications (ISO). As well as administering driving license tests, any modifications to a car – even something as simple as fitting a new set of alloy wheels – require TÜV approval, resulting in a documented change to the vehicle’s specification, after which the car can be used on the road.



△ AMG split rims with wider tyres located out back.

▷ Garrett T03 turbo fits neatly in the engine bay.



Mercedes Insurance

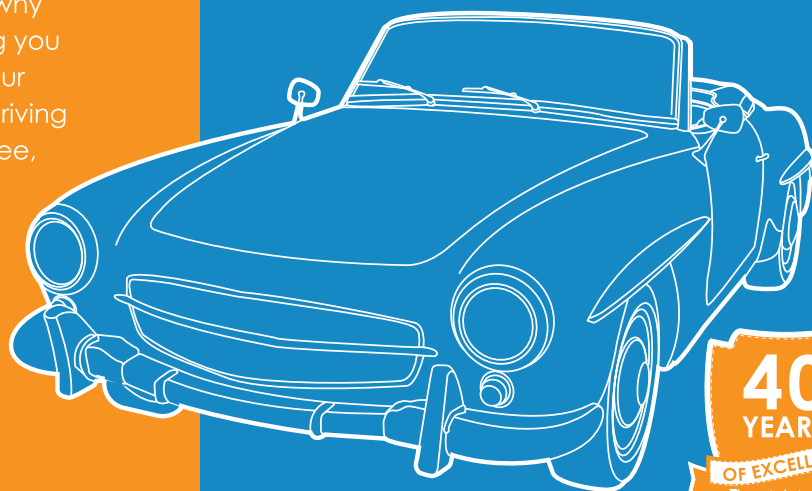
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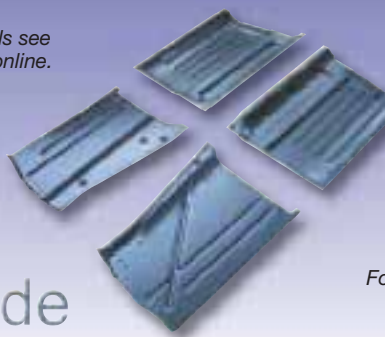
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Purpose built

Seeking something more extreme than conventional track cars, one circuit junkie called on CarTech Knowledge in Munich to build him a one-off C63 AMG

WORDS MATT ZOLLO IMAGES FELIX STECK



△ Rear wings styled in the fashion of Black Series items.

▷ The spoiler and rear diffuser were made for this car.

TAKE A FISH OUT OF water and two things will happen. First, the fish will flap around ineffectually as it tries to do what would ordinarily come naturally to it. Second, you will at once appreciate why a certain metaphor is as commonly used as it is; it uses a perfect example of something that has been asked to do a task that it is totally unqualified to do. Oh, and the fish will struggle to breathe, so remember to put it back once you are done.

You have probably worked out where I am going with this one. This totally one-off, highly

modified C63 has been built from the ground up to be used on track, and we have slapped some incongruous looking trade plates on it and taken it out onto public roads. If ever there was a suitable application of the 'fish out of water' analogy in the motoring world, then this is it. But before we get onto the flailing around and gasping for air that will surely ensue, first some background details.

The car has been built by Munich based tuner CarTech Knowledge, a company that knows a thing or two about track cars. Indeed, company owner David Prussia races a Porsche 997 Cup and it was this that prompted him to

recommend a Porsche to one of his customers when he requested CarTech build him a track car. But the client was having none of it. "He said he would never get in a Porsche, and wanted a C63!" David recalls. "I told him it would be a financial disaster, but he didn't care. So I told him I would need a base car, and two days later a C63 appeared!"

With a C-Class AMG to do with as he saw fit, David and the CarTech team set about creating what must be one of the ultimate W204s. As with any track car worth its salt, it was stripped to the bare shell, its metal carcass seam welded in the appropriate areas and shorn



“CarTech Knowledge knows a thing or two about track cars”

of superfluous metal everywhere else. Next the roll cage was installed; a Wiechers 10-point structure, it is anything but off-the-shelf, having been designed and built specifically for the car.

PORSCHE BAITER

‘Designed and built specifically’ is a phrase that comes up a lot when talking about this C-Class. The majority of the (mainly fibreglass) body panels were made by CarTech Knowledge, except for the front wings, and front and rear bumpers, which are genuine AMG Black Series items. The rear wings, although in the style of a Black Series, were

made by CarTech as the Black Series versions would not have fitted the saloon body. The rear wing and diffuser are also bespoke, as are the super lightweight Makrolon polycarbonate windows, while the dinky door mirrors are pinched from a Porsche 997 Cup. But don’t reveal that to the owner...

Inside, things are as suitably sparse as you would expect. There is a familiar looking 204-series C-Class dashboard, but only the bare bones remain, with just a small heater feeding from the warm air of the engine bay, and a small amount of electrical gubbins behind it – or indeed anywhere in the cabin. As a result,

15kg was saved in wiring alone, and as less electrics means less battery drain, another 25kg will soon be saved with a smaller race spec battery. This C63 AMG car has not been weighed yet, but 1,400kg is expected.

It has been dyno tested, however, so we can tell you it has a very healthy 523bhp (530ps). The beauty of the 6.2-litre M156 V8 is that it packs a very big punch out of the crate and needs relatively few mods to get it punching even harder, particularly in the case of the mildly detuned C63 version. The exhaust system, including headers and 100-cell cats, is custom made by CarTech except for the



▷ Akrapovič titanium rear mufflers, and the only other changes are bigger throttle bodies, K&N panel filters and a remap.

INTERNAL SEDUCTION

Effective cooling is an absolute must for a circuit based car, so this area has come in for much attention. As well as an upgraded radiator and engine oil cooler, there are separate oil coolers for the gearbox (otherwise standard apart from modified software) and Drexler limited-slip differential, the latter also utilising two cooling fans.

As with almost any race car you care to mention, engine bay modifications are trivial compared to what has gone on underneath. Every component here has been upgraded and solidly mounted (though the anti roll bars remain standard, perhaps surprisingly), while the coil-overs are remote reservoir KW competition three-way adjustables. The 9Jx19 and 12Jx19 BBS E88s are from a 997 911 Cup (hence the battle scars), so need 30mm adapters to get the desired offset and stud pattern, but a set in the correct fitment is planned. And behind the front wheels sit Brembo racing six-pots with 380mm discs, although the rear stoppers are standard but for Performance Friction brake pads.

“It really is a totally new development,” explains David. “Doing this with a Porsche, you can buy Cup parts and it’s quite straightforward, but with this car there was nothing available so we had to do everything on our own and custom make it all.”

Unsurprisingly it took CarTech one and a half years to complete, but the company now has most of the parts in stock – or at least can get hold of them far quicker and easier.

That does not put me any more at ease about driving what is basically a one-off race car on the road, however. The Recaro Pro Race seat is

“**The door slams with an empty, hollow noise that echoes around the cabin**”

ridiculously tight around my hips and the Schroth harness does its best to pin me in tighter still. As if it was not already pretty obvious that this machine had not been built for comfort, I pull the door shut with a black strap (the red one is for opening) and the door slams with an empty, hollow noise that echoes around the cabin. This thing is certainly not a conventional Mercedes-Benz.

There are constant squeaks, groans and clonks from down below, metal interacting with metal as the suspension absorbs the road’s rougher surfaces, the noise amplified in the barren cabin. Not only that, but the brakes squeal when you so much as stroke the pedal, and the tyres whine a monotonous tune as soon

as any kind of speed is picked up, grumbling over rough surfaces and changing in note as road consistency varies.

BAD TO THE BONE

The gearbox thumps and jolts from first to second before shuffling through its gears as quickly as the standard one might (totally at odds with the uncompromising nature of the rest of the car). Slow speed manoeuvres result in tyre scrub as the aggressive LSD permits hardly any slip. The mirrors do not mirror much. My elbow keeps trying to find the non

△ All is reasonably calm - until you press the loud pedal.



▽ Roll cage adds stiffness and makes track time safer.

▽◁ A heap of weight has been saved by gutting the cabin.





◁ V8 now has way more power than the C63 Black's.

▽ KW competition suspension is highly adjustable.



existent soft leather armrest and instead brushes hard, cold plastic. The windows do not go down, so interaction with the outside world only happens when you open a door.

It goes on, but all that is to be expected and hardly matters in a hard core driver's car. It certainly does not qualify the car's performance on the road to be likened to that of a fish's out of the water. To find out how it does in that respect, we must take it out of Munich city and into Bavarian countryside. The limits of the car are clearly going to be far higher than approachable on public roads, and many of you

might be wondering why we have not taken it on track. But that is to miss the point of this experience: to enjoy the pure naughtiness of driving something so inappropriate somewhere it is clearly not designed or not actually supposed to be. Anyway, to pass our fish/water test the car should be enjoyable and capable on the road, and that is in no way a given.

But, against all odds, it is immensely enjoyable and capable. Final set up is still to be done, but on the road it feels unflustered and indomitable. It does not skip over bumps or get thrown wildly off course like most race cars

would if they were to encounter such testing tarmac. And, in fact, despite being able to feel precisely the consistency of the road's surface and every detail of its topography, the ride is far better than I imagined it would be. That will be thanks to high quality damping.

STREET FIGHTER

The engine is happy to chug through slow corners on little revs, but then, when you ask for its full performance, it simply erupts from whatever the revs, the note changing from an off-beat, almost misfire, to a full blooded V8 roar. It is as if the engine does not know how to behave until you ask for everything it has got, at which point it suddenly rediscovers itself and the car takes off in a flurry of yellow flashing lights, squirming rear tyres and V8 war cry.

In other words, and despite expectation, this car works very well indeed as a very fast road car for occasional use – and in doing so has pulled off an act almost as miraculous as that of a fish jumping onto its fins and walking across the ground with the finesse of a catwalk model. It makes the proposition of a road legal version a very desirable one indeed.





NEVER TOO OLD

Mercedes-Benz brushes the dust off two heritage vehicles for 2016's epic London to Brighton Veteran Car Run

WORDS **KYLE MOLYNEUX** IMAGES **CRAIG PUSEY & DAIMLER AG**

DESPITE TAKING IN THE glitz and glamour of central London on the way to a seaside finish line, with waving crowds cheering on participants throughout, the 60-mile London to Brighton Veteran Car Run has a more sinister side. It is a serious car breaker.

Taking place on the first Sunday of every November, the event commemorates the Emancipation Run of November 14 1896, itself a celebration of a then new rule which allowed light locomotives to travel at 14mph instead of 4. Crucially, no cars built after 1904 can participate in the meeting, but that doesn't stop around 400 of these rare beauties turning up every year.



◁ Eddie Jordan gets underway in Hyde Park.

◁▽ Westminster Bridge offered beautiful views.

▽ The Simplex won a French hillclimb in 1902.

more times in subsequent years. In 2014, the car was carefully restored and its original dark red paint finish revived.

With the London to Brighton run proper taking place on Sunday, the day before allowed drivers and passengers to get used to heavy traffic – and crisp air temperatures – with a get-together in central London, culminating in the Regent Street Motor Show. Public interest in the display was high, and things reached fever pitch when the cars were coaxed back into life and shuffled away from the pretty location at 4pm, ready for an early start the next morning in Hyde Park. The sight and sound of 400 pre-war motorcars barking, wheezing, steaming and honking their way down world famous Regent Street will be a lasting memory of anyone who witnessed it.

HIGH RATE OF ATTRITION

Come Sunday and the crowd’s enthusiasm was greater still, Eddie Jordan doing the honours in Hyde Park and symbolically tearing a red flag

Mercedes-Benz Classic dug out its Mercedes-Simplex 40hp and Benz Spider



△ Many visitors to the motor show had not seen a Mercedes like this before.

▷ Members of the Mercedes-Benz Classic team with the Benz.

As London to Brighton was marking its 120th anniversary in the same year Mercedes-Benz was celebrating 130 years since the invention of the motorcar, it only seemed right that Mercedes take part. For the event, Mercedes-Benz Classic dug out its Mercedes-Simplex 40hp, an elegant yet sturdy looking machine from 1903, packing a 6,785cc four-cylinder engine good for over 60mph, astonishingly. The Simplex is one of the oldest cars in Mercedes’ collection and had taken part in the London to Brighton run several times before.

CHARIOTS OF DESIRE

The other car brought by Mercedes Classic was a Benz Spider, built in 1902 and generally a more rudimentary design than the Simplex,



sporting a 2,945cc two-cylinder engine producing 15hp, and capable of just under 40mph. Driving the Benz, at least part of the way, would be Formula 1 personality Eddie Jordan, the Irishman’s link to the car being that it was delivered to Ireland in 1902 and used there for 30 years. The Benz took part in the London to Brighton event of 1960, and was acquired by Daimler-Benz AG in 1969, the company proceeding to enter the car several

to signal the Run’s start – the flag’s significance being that it was carried by men who led those old locomotives at a snail like 4mph down the railway lines. The Irishman’s luck, however, was soon to run out when the Benz Spider broke an engine bearing shortly after crossing Westminster Bridge. Luckily, there was room for Jordan and co-driver Claus Balle in the Simplex for the rest of the journey.

The London to Brighton extravaganza is not strictly a race, but that doesn’t stop drivers getting their elbows out in modern day traffic and pulling some quite breathtaking manoeuvres – all in the spirit of preserving one’s brakes and clutch, you understand.

And speaking of clutch issues, it soon became apparent to Simplex pilot Michael Plag that his steed would not last the journey without taking a stop on the outskirts of Brighton. As you would expect, overheating is a concern for participants, but the capital’s heavy traffic often asks more of a pre-war clutch system than it can handle.

EVENT London to Brighton Veteran Car Run



◀ The Mercedes-Simplex can still be considered fast!

▷ Starting these cars is no easy feat and takes much patience.

▷ Two-cylinder Benz motor with 15hp and intricate radiator.



The capital's heavy traffic often asks more of a pre-war clutch system than it can handle

▷ THE FINAL PUSH

With oil and other fluids seeping out from the Simplex's engine, and occupants red faced and shivering from biting cold, the Simplex team had its work cut out to make the finish on Brighton's Madeira Drive. But, somehow, they demolished the last five miles and took the chequered flag to great applause from

spectators gathered on the sea front.

Various participants popped open champagne chilled on the breeze, while others shared tales of miraculously escapes, and some just breathed a great sigh of relief as they pulled to their final parking stop. All the while, their

multi coloured motorcars ticked and steamed in bright sunshine, undoubtedly more worn than when they had started, but still very much alive and kicking.

Unlike many historic events run in the 21st century, the drive from London to Brighton is no less challenging than it used to be. Due to increased traffic volumes, it's arguably far harder. Every car has different starting and driving procedures, but they all require sweat and elbow grease from their masters, the unsung heroes of the Veteran Car Run. Driving has always been a luxury, but it hasn't always been so easy.

Eddie Jordan speaks to the cameras after crossing the finish line in the Simplex.



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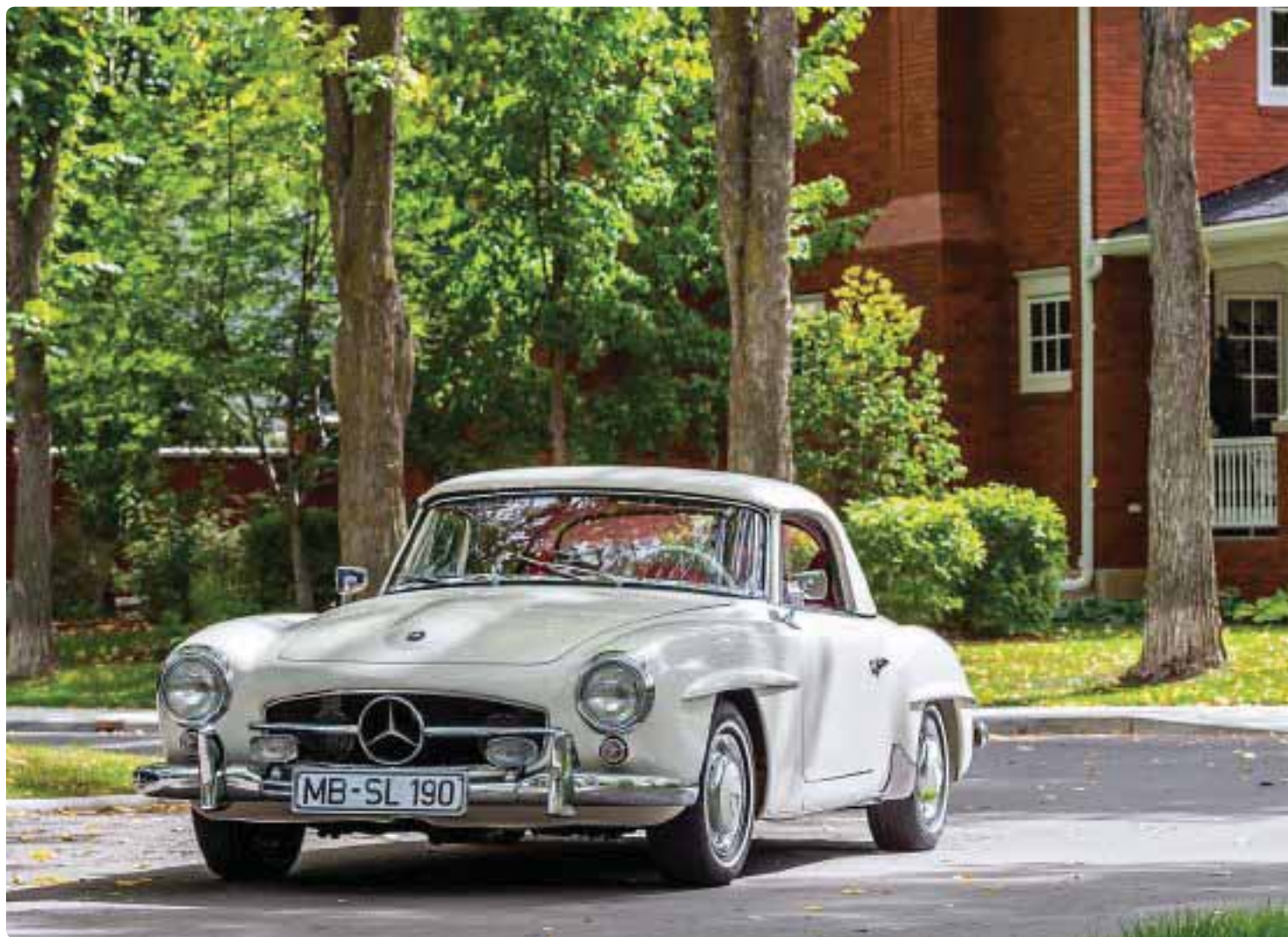


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February 2017 issue

ON SALE January 20th



WHITE & RED

Already a rare find in Canada, this 190SL was built during a time when Benz was still finding its feet in the region

WORDS **GARRY MELNYK** IMAGES **ROB HISLOP**

BEFORE providing you some background on Ashraf Jaffer's 1958 190SL Roadster, I need to begin with a history lesson.

Mercedes-Benz Canada was only incorporated in 1955 and sold 627 cars the next year. Although large geographically, Canada's population was small back then with the automobile market dominated by the domestic 'Big Three'. The only minor imports were Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz. Interest in British imports was beginning to diminish.

Natalie Gravel with Mercedes-Benz Canada told me the company

can only track sales records back to the late 1960s, "so there is no way to tell how many 1958 190SL models were imported into Canada for sale." So finding a Canadian imported 190SL between 1956 and 1963 would be extremely rare. If one did come across a mid 50s SL, it would likely be in a major city like Toronto or Montreal where Mercedes-Benz first established dealerships. A total of 25,881 190SLs (roadsters and coupes) were produced during 1955 to 1963.

For now, only two 190SL models exist in the city of Edmonton. A red-orange roadster which has been under the care of a

JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz 190SL Roadster (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

Figures for a 1958 car as pictured; fuel consumption determined at ¾ of top speed (not more than 110km/h, 68mph) plus 10 per cent

dealership principal at Heritage Valley Mercedes-Benz of Edmonton, bought the restored roadster from a small broker in Los Angeles, California after much searching. Wilson had been on the hunt for a classic Mercedes-Benz for a long time not just to add to his collection of vehicles, but to tie in the heritage theme of his dealership by displaying an older car in the showroom.

RIVAL BUYERS

Wilson personally flew down to Los Angeles to see the 190SL and have it checked over at a reputable Mercedes dealership. The roadster received a thumbs up on all aspects, and came with much documentation including a record of its detailed restoration.

Originally painted silver, Wilson wasn't bothered by the change to white, especially as it appeared to have no negative effect on value. He much prefers white anyway. After its arrival and placement in



Ashraf Jaffer bought this 1958 roadster from a dealership principal in Edmonton.



Wilson's dealership, a person came forward eager to buy the car.

Ashraf Jaffer, an Edmonton printer, has been a fan of Mercedes-Benz automobiles since he was a little boy when he saw a few Merc saloons sitting outside a mosque in Kinshasa in his native Congo. He told his father that one day he would own a Mercedes-Benz. Decades later the success of his business allowed him to do just that, with a fleet of four Mercedes vehicles. Wilson's 190SL also caught Jaffer's eye. "I wasn't looking to buy anything at the time. But every time I went to the showroom, I used to fall in love with the car."

He eventually asked who the owner was, and now Wilson had two potential buyers before he'd even driven the car himself. Jaffer won out in the end as Wilson knew he was a loyal customer. A deal

was struck where the 190SL would be serviced and stored at the dealership showroom where it

would sit as a heritage piece for all visitors to see. One specific technician is assigned to maintain and have the roadster road ready whenever

Jaffer wants to take it for a spin.

The arrangement is a win-win situation for both men.

While Jaffer says the roadster is primarily a business investment, he does appreciate its history, the quality of the restoration, and the simplicity of its mechanicals. Jaffer has barely driven the car since he purchased it in 2014, so he's very eager to get behind the wheel for our photoshoot in Edmonton's old Glenora neighbourhood. He's all smiles

and enjoys his time wheeling around and cruising through various streets. Later, his generosity is extended to a wedding party that stops by. The bride and groom get some pictures taken in and around the car. Jaffer hopes one day the car will be used for photos when his son marries.

PICTURE PERFECT

He says the 190SL has no problem cruising at 80km/h (50mph) on Edmonton's busy Whitemud freeway. "I was keeping up with everyone else," he says with a grin. As we shoot close-ups of the roadster, I can't keep my eyes off every surface, taking in every detail as I'm not accustomed to seeing such a rare old model. To me it's a work of art with an instrument panel so very well detailed and precise – a work of art still attainable for some people, as these cars can be purchased for well under CA\$300,000 (£180,000) at this point in time. ■





SEASON OF GOODWILL

UK car buyers continue to put their money where their mouths are - and who can blame them with such an appealing range of Mercedes to choose from?

WORDS **GUY BAKER** IMAGES **MATT RICHARSON, TERRY OBORENE & DAIMLER AG**

DESPITE THE ongoing political machinations on both sides of the Atlantic, the UK used car market remains in good health, continuing the trends we have seen over almost the whole of 2016.

The new car market too has performed well, with 180,168 new registrations which was 1.4 per cent up on October last year. This contributed to a growth of 2.5 per cent in the year to date figures. Mercedes-Benz registered 11,334 new cars – a growth of 14.2 per cent over October 2015, giving the company a year-to-date UK record market share of 6.4 per cent. The Mercedes C-Class was the UK's ninth best selling new car.

Looking in more detail at the used market for Mercedes-Benzes, strong prices have in the main been retained and conversion rates

are still high. The reasonable weather has also meant convertible values have remained strong, but so did SUV values – it will be interesting to see how they perform over winter. Condition and presentation remain vitally important at auction, and this was noticeable with higher mileage Mercedes, the best of which made the sort of money that would be expected for vehicles with average mileage. Meanwhile the retail market started the month well, although there are suggestions that demand has been waning more recently.

Market analyst Glass's Live Pricing Data, which measures the

length of time vehicles remain on the forecourt, has showed a slight increase in the overall stocking time for Mercedes-Benz cars, with the average S-Class taking the longest to sell at 65 days. The quickest model to find buyers, was the GLA-Class with an average sale time of just 36 days, although the range that showed the greatest

improvement was actually the CLK, down by 11 days to 'just' 40 days.

Looking forward to 2017, early indications are that the

used market will continue to be healthy, with decent values and conversion rates. However, the difference in values between well

prepared, ready to retail cars and those that require work seems to be widening. There have been comments that the retail market will slow a little, but for the moment demand is still there.

DOING A DEAL

The winter period isn't ideal for test driving an older Mercedes SL, and that puts off most potential buyers until the spring. Of course, dealers – however well off – still prefer to shift stock, rather than have it sitting around occupying valuable space and accumulating dust over the winter.

We spotted a few potential targets at Swanley based independent Peter Jarvis, such as a 1988 Diamond Blue 300SL advertised for £39,750, a 1987 left-hand drive Signal Red 560SL up for £46,750, and a 1992 Astral Silver 300SL for just £9,750.

The winter period isn't ideal for test driving an older Mercedes SL, and that puts off most potential buyers until the spring

Our best used buy this month...

S350 Bluetec (2010-2013)

Demand for the UK's largest four-door second hand buys has never been lower, and that has made Mercedes' V6 turbodiesel S-Class superb value as a used car. Incredibly, the earliest 155mph S350 Bluetecs, built from 2010, are now changing hands for just £16,000, which is amazingly cheap when you

consider that – despite the car's obvious size, performance and kudos – combined fuel economy is well over 40mpg, and road tax will cost around £200 per year.

A smidgeon under £20,000 now buys a Mercedes-Benz Approved Used 2011 model with around 70,000 miles on the clock, whilst £20,000 bags a 60,000-mile, 2012 example complete with a whole raft of luxurious optional extras.



► Fancy a luxurious Mercedes but with more bite and a lower price tag? Then see our top three £10,000 'Luxury cruisers' on page 82!

FORECOURT FIND

CLS500
(C219)

Mercedes' CLS coupe is still a head-turner – even more so in swooping original 219-series guise. But you might be surprised to discover that early CLS500s now change hands for less than nine grand. There was an engine change in 2007, so the earlier 2004-2006 'M113' V8 models offer the best value for money.

Take for example, this immaculate, one-owner, 2006 car we spotted at Drayton Car Centre in Middlesex for £8,495. With just 30,000 miles on the clock, it's barely run in despite being 10 years old, and packs a serious spec as well as ample 4,966cc V8 muscle (302bhp and 339lb ft torque). A mint, low mile example like this one could quite easily hold its value in years to come.

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USED CAR
WARRANTIES

Is the additional cover really worth the cost?

⚠ All used Mercedes-Benzes bought from a franchised dealer will come with some warranty, but there are different levels of cover offered on different cars, so check what is being offered.

⚠ Mechanical and electrical component failure, interior trim issues and many bodywork issues are covered by a Mercedes Approved Used Warranty. But 'wear and tear' issues are excluded. If a non insured component damages an insured item you'll have to foot the bill.

⚠ Approved Used Mercedes are usually more expensive than equivalent cars at specialists, and you can buy an independent used car warranty instead – compare the overall costs of both options before deciding.

⚠ Don't forget that most warranty policies have some sort of excess, which you'll have to pay in the event of a claim, in addition to your monthly premiums.

⚠ Read all the small print very carefully for exclusions. Check where and when the car should be serviced and check the maximum amount that's covered under a claim.

⚠ Many warranties don't cover diagnostic fees, or things which frequently fail on older Mercedes, such as lighting, interior trim, batteries, other electrical items, exhausts and suspension components.

⚠ Balance the monthly cost against the likely risk. For a reliable Mercedes that's worth relatively little, a warranty may not be worth it, whereas on an expensive but less reliable model it might be a sensible idea.



AUCTION SPOTLIGHT

A round up of recent prices paid for modern Mercedes-Benz cars in auctions across the UK

● **S320**

3.2L, petrol, auto, 1996/P plate, 100,000 miles, **£700**

● **S500**

5.0L, petrol, auto, 1999/V plate, 108,000 miles, **£1,200**

● **SLK230 Kompressor**

2.3L, petrol, auto, 2001/Y plate, 81,000 miles, **£2,400**

● **E320 CDI Avantgarde**

3.2L, diesel, auto, 2004/04 plate, 168,000 miles, **£2,450**

● **SLK320**

3.2L, petrol, auto, 2001/Y plate, 58,000 miles, **£3,250**

● **A200 Elegance SE**

2.0L, petrol, manual, 2006/06 plate, 36,000 miles, **£3,500**

● **CLK320 Coupe Elegance**

3.2L, petrol, auto, 2004/04 plate, 44,000 miles, **£3,900**

● **CLK200 K Coupe Elegance**

1.8L, petrol, auto, 2005/05 plate, 88,000 miles, **£5,100**

● **E350 Estate Sport**

3.5L, petrol, auto, 2005/55 plate, 74,000 miles, **£5,300**

● **C220 CDI BlueEfficiency Sport**

2.1L, diesel, auto, 2012/62 plate, 42,000 miles, **£12,650**

● **CLA180 Coupe Sport**

1.6L, petrol, manual, 2013/63 plate, 27,000 miles, **£15,575**

● **GL350 CDI BlueEfficiency**

3.0L, diesel, auto, 2009/59 plate, 74,000 miles, **£19,800**

● **CLS350 CDI BlueEfficiency Coupe**

3.0L, diesel, auto, 2013/63, 25,000 miles, **£19,800**

● **SL55 AMG**

5.4L, petrol, auto, 2007/07 plate, 37,000 miles, **£25,500**

● **C63 AMG Estate**

6.2L, petrol, auto, 2012/62 plate, 38,000 miles, **£25,600**

AUCTION ADVICE

Arrive early and examine the vehicle you're interested in before bidding starts. Should your bid be successful, you will have to pay a buyer's fee in addition to the hammer price, and you must pay a deposit, typically of around £500 or 20 per cent of the vehicle's value (whichever is greater) in cash, or by Maestro or Visa Debit card. The balance of the purchase price and the buyer's fee can be paid by banker's draft, cash, cheque, telegraphic transfer, credit or debit card. Find your nearest auction at www.british-car-auctions.co.uk and learn more about UK car auction companies at www.nama-uk.com



TOP 3 £10,000 LUXURY CRUISERS

The chances are that you've already spent far too much time trying to figure out what to buy your nearest and dearest for Christmas. But come on – you deserve a treat too! And what could be more rewarding than a fast, luxurious Mercedes-Benz cruiser – especially if it comes with a naturally aspirated V8 engine and a lowly £10,000 price tag?

All three of this month's suggestions possess lavish specifications that would put most new cars to shame. Exemplary not only at cruising effortlessly, all three also have the power to surprise whenever it's needed. So go on – forget the mother-in-law for once and treat yourself to a proper present this Christmas!



CL500 (C216)

Our first contender, the CL500 in 2007 guise packs a serious 383bhp punch, to go with a sumptuous cabin and sublime ride quality. With 391lb ft of torque, the performance will never be found wanting – 62mph dispatched in 5.4 seconds. The healthy spec includes Mercedes' excellent 7G-Tronic transmission, full leather upholstery and 18- or 19-inch alloys. A CL500 provides all the necessary car park kudos and plenty of interior space for you and your choice of passenger to relax on even the very longest of journeys.



ML500 SE (W164)

SUVs are the new luxury saloons, and with an imperious view of the road ahead and a meaty V8 under the hood you'll enjoy every journey in Mercedes' rare ML500. Our 10 grand budget will buy you a well maintained, 302bhp, 2006 example with around 70,000 miles. With a 6.9-second 0-62mph time and a 140mph top speed, the ML500 is rapid. Expect your car to include sat nav, heated front seats, a Harman Kardon Logic 7 surround sound System, Airmatic air suspension, and full leather upholstery.



CLK500 CABRIOLET SPORT (A209)

Our final offering is a convertible, and a pretty exclusive one too. The M113 V8 equipped CLK500 can be found in facelifted 2005-2009 form with just 50,000 miles for 10 grand. With 302bhp and a 6.1-second 0-62mph time, the performance from this V8 is more than ample. Capable of averaging 30mpg on a motorway run, your CLK500 must possess a full service history to go with its plush spec. The very best examples are already increasing in value.

MERCEDES PRODUCTS

EAST COAST OIL & ADDITIVE COMPANY

The East Coast Oil & Additive Company has launched a retro inspired automotive range to enthusiasts, offering additives and oils for all types of classic vehicles. The range includes synthetic, semi synthetic and mineral based formulations and is aimed at motorists and enthusiasts of classic, modern classic, hot rod and muscle cars. The oils and additives themselves comprise the latest chemical formulations and engine applications to meet the most stringent OEM and international standards, to provide the highest level of care to classics. Products include petrol and diesel injector cleaners, octane boosters, and classic blend 20W-50 motor oil. See www.eastcoastadditives.com/uk for more information.



LARTE DESIGN STYLING KIT FOR MERCEDES GLS

If you don't feel your GLS has enough road presence already then perhaps you should consider Larte Design's new GLS 'Black Crystal' package. The Russian tuning company has made more than 50 detail changes to produce a highly personalised vehicle, complete with two dark Swarovski Crystals embedded in the front bumper. Larte Design's striking kit features new front and rear bumpers with carbon fibre inserts and an air splitter, a rear air diffuser, four carbon cased exhaust pipes, an F1 style LED braking light and many more carbon fibre parts. Visit www.larte-design.com for more details.



MOMO REVENGE EVO ALLOY WHEELS

If you're in the market for some exclusive 20-inch alloy wheels for your Mercedes then why not take a look at the MOMO Revenge Evo? UK MOMO distributor, Brown & Geeson is now offering the new Momo Revenge EVO wheel, featuring a modern, 10 split-spoke design with a dished centre with a diamond cut face, from £135. Available up to size 20-inch, the Revenge EVO will fit the majority of Mercedes models, with the 20-inch version retailing at £249.99 plus VAT per alloy. Order these wheels online at www.b-gdirect.com.





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FORGOTTEN SON

The 107-series SLC has been overshadowed by its roadster brother ever since it launched in 1971, but views on the Mercedes coupe have softened in recent years - with prices increasing to match the steadily rising interest

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

THE MERCEDES-Benz SLC, built for a decade until October 1981, was the car the classic market overlooked until it was almost too late. While the R107 SL roadster on which the SLC was based has been collectable ever since its production ceased, and hence survives in substantial numbers, the C107 coded coupe became forgotten and unloved once the striking 126-series coupe arrived to replace it. A total of 62,888 SLCs were manufactured, hardly an inconsequential number, yet

they are rarely seen, most having been sent to the scrapheap.

Perhaps people felt the SLC, 360mm longer in wheelbase and length than the SL, and with awkward rear window trims (there to disguise the fact that the rear windows could not be fully lowered), lacked the SL's graceful lines. Values stayed low, which meant that relatively minor problems could spell a one-way trip to the crusher.

But things are now changing. As it has become apparent just how scarce these big pillarless coupes have become, collectors are having

second thoughts and prices are rising. They are still to be found for £4,000 to £5,000, which gets you into a rolling project, but the big difference is to be seen at the other end of the market, with prices now closing on R107s.

So now is almost certainly your last chance to pay reasonable money for one of the most expensive and exclusive Mercedes from the 1970s. They are mechanically simple in most respects, immensely durable and there are lots of specialists who know them through and through. Just add bravery.

DESIGN & EVOLUTION

The Paris motor show of October 1971 saw the C107's debut, six months after the SL roadster had been unveiled. The first model to go on sale, in February 1972, was the 350SLC using a 3.5-litre V8 engine producing 197bhp, this coming to the UK market two months after. In July 1972 the 450SLC was added but sold exclusively in North America until February 1973, its 4.5-litre V8 with US spec emissions equipment producing a paltry 192bhp; when it was launched in mainland Europe, and the UK, output was 222bhp.

SPOTTED
FOR SALE
PRIVATE SELLER450SLC
1979, brown, tan velour
interior, 96,000 miles,
£8,350, Cheshire

“They are mechanically
simple in most respects,
and immensely durable”

Both came with a three-speed automatic transmission as standard, but in some markets the 350 could be ordered with a four-speed manual gearbox. However once the 450 arrived, the 350 was dropped from the UK range, so is a very rare car here.

SLCs were set up for comfort, with long coil suspension springs and Mercedes' usual recirculating ball steering. In 1974, no doubt in response to the 'oil crisis' that had gripped the world since the previous year, Mercedes installed its 2.7-litre, DOHC, M110 six-cylinder engine, good for 182bhp, in both the SL and SLC, the latter badged 280SLC. It had a four- rather than three-speed automatic gearbox, and could also be ordered as a four-speed manual, which some were.

The 280SLC was not sold in the UK at that point, therefore the 450SLC was the sole C107 delivered in Britain throughout the 1970s. Between November 1975 and February 1976 all three engines were modified for lower

emissions, mechanical Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection replacing the electronic D-Jetronic, and transistorised ignition replacing the time honoured points set up. The 450SLC's output dropped slightly to 214bhp.

In September 1977 Mercedes introduced the limited run 450SLC 5.0 (see the 'Rally car for the road' section on page 88), and the final C107 development came in 1980 with the introduction of a new model, the 380SLC, its new 3.8-litre, aluminium V8 generating 215bhp. In October 1980 the 280SLC was imported to the UK, its output having dipped in 1976 and then restored in 1978 to its original level. The 450 ceased production in October 1980, while the 280 and 380 continued for a further year.

DRIVING THE C107

This is classic old school Mercedes-Benz. You sit behind a huge steering wheel, facing a dashboard that as well as being almost identical to the R107's

looks solid and functional, and you have the usual springy seats, more likely to be trimmed in velour than leather. The rear seat will take two adults, but space is not generous.

The 4.5 V8 is woolly and relaxed, but the pace is not quick, due in part to the lazy three-speed gearbox. Specialised five-litre cars apart, the late arriving 380SLC is widely reckoned to be the best model, thanks to the M116 engine being more lively, and the four-speed automatic more responsive than the three-speeder. The 2.7-litre in the 280SLC changes the car's character, as it needs to be revved to shift the car briskly (though the C107 is not significantly heavier than the R107). Handling is failsafe, not at all sporty but well balanced.

WHAT YOU'LL PAY

The days of running, MOT'd C107s going for £1,000 to £2,000 are gone, those either no longer in existence or taken in hand. Nonetheless, few other classic

JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz 280SLC (C107)

ENGINE M110 2,746cc 6-cyl

POWER 182bhp@5,800rpm

TORQUE 177lb ft@4,500rpm

TRANSMISSION 4-speed auto, RWD

WEIGHT 1,550kg

0-62MPH 11.0sec

TOP SPEED 121mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 22.6mpg

YEARS PRODUCED 1974-1981

Mercedes-Benz 380SLC (C107)

ENGINE M116 3,818cc V8

POWER 215bhp@5,500rpm

TORQUE 221lb ft@4,000rpm

TRANSMISSION 4-speed auto, RWD

WEIGHT 1,560kg

0-62MPH 9.0sec

TOP SPEED 134mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 14.9mpg

YEARS PRODUCED 1980-1981

Mercedes-Benz 450SLC (C107)

ENGINE M116 3,818cc V8

POWER 214bhp@5,000rpm

TORQUE 265lb ft@4,000rpm

TRANSMISSION 3-speed auto, RWD

WEIGHT 1,630kg

0-62MPH 9.3sec

TOP SPEED 130mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 19.5mpg

YEARS PRODUCED 1972-1980

Mercedes-Benz 450SLC 5.0 /500SLC (C107)

ENGINE M117 4,973cc V8

POWER 237bhp@5,000rpm

TORQUE 297lb ft@3,200rpm

TRANSMISSION 3-speed auto, RWD

WEIGHT 1,515kg

0-62MPH 8.5/7.8sec

TOP SPEED 140mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 13.6mpg

YEARS PRODUCED 1978-1980/1980-1981

Figures for an April 1978-on 280SLC (cars built until February 1976 had 182bhp/176lb ft, and from then until April 1978 175bhp/172lb ft), and a 1975 450SLC as pictured (this model produced 222bhp/278lb ft until November 1975); fuel consumption for the 280SLC, 450SLC and 450SLC 5.0/500SLC determined at ¼ of top speed (not more than 110 km/h, 68mph) plus 10 per cent, and for the 380SLC according to EEC urban

Mercedes models show such a wide price range, seen for sale in classifieds for £5,000 to £6,000 but also at classic specialists for 10 times that, such as the 1975 450SLC with just 18,000 miles photographed here, offered by high end classic sports car specialist Howard Wise in Essex for £49,995. Cars without bodywork or mechanical issues, but not concours, are to be found in the £10,000 to £20,000 range.

The sub £10,000 cars are usually offered privately, the top priced cars tending to appear only at classic dealers. However we've noticed of late that sellers are increasingly using the various classic auctions.

C107 INSIDE AND OUT

POWERTRAIN

Bruce Greetham, director at Redditch based SL specialist, SL Shop, immediately warns of the problems of pre 1976 cars' fuel system. "They have the early D-Jetronic injection system which is complicated to fix when it goes wrong," he says, "and specialist knowledge is needed to understand it." The rubber pipes tend to perish and leak.

The M117 V8 is reliable and long lasting, although sheer age can now work against it. For example, the exhaust manifold is likely to be rusted solid against the engine's iron block, turning a straightforward task such as changing the

manifold gasket into an engine-out job. This problem does not affect the all aluminium 380SLC M116 engine.

On all M117 engines, you must check the condition of the camshaft chain - a long length of chain that serves both cylinder banks. A rattling noise means it could be about to break with potentially devastating consequences for the cylinder heads and valves. Also check the condition of the camshafts, by removing the oil filler cap and looking in at the state of the cam; if it's worn, the opposite one is likely to be in the same condition.

From far left: No SLC apart from the 450 5.0/500 can be thought of as truly fast, but plentiful torque makes the V8s great cruisers, the in-line six not quite as effortless; almost all cars are an automatic.



SUSPENSION, STEERING AND BRAKES

There are no particular issues here, but once again age can be the enemy. The suspension and subframe bushes are likely to be worn, which affects handling, making the SLC feel vague at the front. It's also likely that all of the suspension dampers will be worn and possibly leaking too.

Even when new the C107's steering lacked much feel, and with wear added vagueness sets it. It may leak too, and to check this you will need to inspect from underneath, as leaks will not be spotted by looking in the engine bay. If the



system 'groans' when lock is applied, the fluid in the steering reservoir may be too low. For brakes, it's

simply a question of checking for wear, but disc/pad replacement is not expensive at about £300.

The SLC is surprisingly long at 4.75m; rear side window slats a curiosity.

SPOTTED
FOR SALE
CLASSIC CAR DEALER

350SLC
1971, LHD, metallic grey, red
leather, 131,000 km (81,000
miles), £15,000,
London



Silver Green metallic paint would make finding rust easy - if there was any on this 18,000-mile example; 31,739 450SLCs were made by Benz.

The body must be checked for advanced corrosion in the bulkhead areas, chassis legs, inner and outer sills, boot floor and floorpans

BODYWORK AND WHEELS

If there is a lot of body rust, walk away. "The body must be checked for advanced corrosion in the bulkhead areas, chassis legs, inner and outer sills, boot floor and floorpans and so on," Bruce warns. "If this is evident on the car, then in most cases it is not worth undertaking repairs unless the car has some sentimental value. You can easily invest well over £60,000 on restoring a C107."

Early cars came with steel wheels and colour matched hub caps, while later models had 'Mexican hat' alloys, all rims 14-inch. If the alloys are in poor condition, a set of four will be easy enough to source for £150 to £200. But if the tyres are worn, budget over £200 for each one - 205/70VR14 is no longer a mainstream size, so you'll need a specialist classic tyre such as a Pirelli Cinturato.



INTERIOR AND ELECTRICS

The interior is another crucial aspect of a C107. Most had a deep pile velour trim, which, unlike leather, does not look better with age. "The early interior fabrics are now hard to find, and the cloth is very expensive," Bruce comments.

As on most classic cars, a sunroof is more of a curse than an asset. "The sunroof models can suffer with drainage problems front and rear, water leaking all the way down into the sills," Bruce tells us. He also points out that the engine ECU (electronic control unit) is mounted in the passenger footwell, and if it suffers water ingress as a result of leaks into the cabin, the engine may run poorly. ▷

Clockwise from top left: Owners of R107 SLs would find most of the SLC's cabin familiar, including its lack of luxury items; basic instrument cluster design includes an oil pressure gauge; longer wheelbase to accommodate extra rear space.

C107 INSIDE AND OUT

VERDICT

After decades being shunned, during which it almost became extinct, the 107-series SLC has been rehabilitated in the eyes of collectors, and some now even hail it as a nicer car to drive than the R107 roadster. It's certainly a better prospect if you don't want the full exposure that a convertible subjects you to.

But affordable as they still can be, ownership of a C107 can never be half-hearted. You must be prepared to spend money maintaining it properly, and the uncomplicated nature of its design is not reflected in running costs, which will be high, at least until you get it sorted to your satisfaction. That said, look after an SLC when you buy it and the car will look after you when you come to sell it.



Rally car for the road



The 450SLC 5.0, introduced at the Frankfurt motor show in 1977 amounted to Mercedes' first 'homologation special'. With its five-litre, all aluminium V8 40kg lighter than the 4.5, and producing 237bhp/296lb ft, and a further 80kg shed through use of aluminium for the bonnet, bootlid and bumpers, and special lightweight wheels, this was the car Stuttgart entered in the World Rally Championship from 1978 to 1980. Badge apart, you can tell it from a regular C107 by the small black plastic wing on the bootlid, and the grey finish on the lower

side bodywork. Furthermore, the seats are set slightly lower.

It received a four-speed automatic gearbox and slightly modified engine for 1980, though output remained the same, and was rebadged the 500SLC. Road trim production of both models totalled 2,769, and all came in left-hand drive. Even in their rallying days the cars lacked a high profile, and have never been celebrated in the way some homologation cars have (for example the 1990 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II), hence their values remain relatively modest. That said, good ones that do come up for sale will probably be £40,000 plus.

**SPOTTED
FOR SALE
CLASSIC SPORTS
CAR DEALER
450SLC**

1989, Australian import,
Champagne silver, tan
leather, 93,500 miles,
£15,990, Surrey

Typical basic servicing costs (A/B services including VAT)

MODEL	ANNUAL LUBRICATION SERVICE	MAJOR SERVICE
380/450SLC	£250	£475

Recalls and non routine servicing costs

- ★ **Gearbox service** £290
- ★ **Replace timing chain and tensioner** £1,430
- ★ **Front brake pads and brake discs** £290
- ★ **Replace front subframe bushes** £600
- ★ **Engine mounts** £440
- ★ **Shock absorbers, front/rear** £510/£535
- ★ **Four Pirelli Cinturato tyres** £950

**Parts and servicing prices from SL Shop; tyre price from Longstone Tyres*

Buyer's checks

- ✓ Rust is likely to be found ahead of the windscreen, on the floor, chassis legs, wings and doors
- ✓ Check rear windows slats are solid, as paint peels
- ✓ A rattling sound from the engine is a warning that a new engine cam chain is needed
- ✓ Early cars have electronic D-Jetronic injection, which is temperamental, and leaks
- ✓ Checking the steering box is not leaking - this must be done from underneath the car
- ✓ Worn suspension bushes will cause sloppy handling and can cause creaking sounds
- ✓ Velour interior trim has its own special appeal but does not age well and is tricky to replace

What you'll pay

£4,000-£6,000 280, 380 and 450SLC, running but in need of serious body and mechanical work
£6,000-£10,000 Compete, trouble free cars, but still a little rough around the edges
£10,000-£20,000 Investment grade SLCs start at this price, should be free of body corrosion
£20,000-£30,000 Above average condition inside and out, and the minimum for a 450SLC 5.0/500SLC
£30,000-£40,000 original condition body and interior, genuine sub 50,000 miles and full history
£40,000-£50,000 Only 'time warp' C107s make this sort of money. Must have sub 20,000 miles and as new interior and mechanicals.

► Thank you to **Howard Wise** in Essex for the loan of the 450SLC Tel 020 8418 9191 Web www.howardwisecars.co.uk
 and to **SL Shop** in Worcestershire for technical advice, and parts and servicing prices Tel 01386 791072 Web www.theshop.com

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PARTS PHOTOGRAPHER

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BABY BENZ

A rare, South African imported 190E 2.3 Sportline joins the *Mercedes Enthusiast* fleet and gives its thrilled new owner plenty to write about

WORDS **KYLE MOLYNEUX** IMAGES **TERRY OBORNE & KYLE MOLYNEUX**

FACTSHEET

CARS 2004 S203 C55 AMG Estate/1993 W201 190E 2.3 Sportline

OWNER Mercedes Enthusiast/Kyle Molyneux

LOCATION London, UK

PURCHASED July 2014/September 2016

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Pressing jobs on the 190E include sorting the rear jacking points; Autoglym Headlight Restoration kit found for C55



**NEW
ARRIVAL**

I CAME VERY CLOSE to buying a 90,000-mile 190E 2.6 manual at auction several months ago, but the car quickly surged beyond its top estimate of £1,800 and thus beyond the reach of my modest budget. Still keen to add a modern classic Mercedes to my stable, my search resumed a few days after I'd recovered from my initial disappointment.

I wanted a 'baby Benz' with six-cylinder power, but couldn't quite bring myself to 'invest' in anything with a very high mileage. An odometer showing in excess of 150,000 miles just didn't float my boat, even though I know these small saloons are capable of



▷ **Almandine Red** metallic paint and 15-inch alloy wheels.

so much more, thanks to Mercedes-Benz ploughing over £600m into their research and development phase.

Making things even harder for my search was my yearning for a car with a manual gearbox. Why? Well, I've always believed the W201 is an underrated driver's car, and with a gutsy straight-six in the nose I could imagine myself becoming frustrated with a slow-witted four-speed automatic. I also think the manual gearbox's action isn't as bad as some would have you believe.

Happily, unlike the 16-valve Cosworth variants, regular versions of the W201 190 are not quite on the collector's radar yet, making them enticingly affordable. That said, during my six-month search I did notice that values of original and well kept examples had begun to harden. As I write, Hertfordshire company Seymour Pope is offering a 25,000-mile 190E 2.6 automatic for just shy of 11 grand, so clearly at least one party believes these cars are on the cusp of great things.

PLENTY OF EXTRAS

Waking one day in early September and carrying out my, by this time daily online search for a car, a new entry stared back at me: a 1993 190E 2.3 Sportline in Almandine Red metallic. Not only was this gem located close by and within budget, it also had a five-speed manual gearbox. I will admit that my heart raced a little when I read that last detail.

As far as I could tell from the advert, there were just a few sticking points. The first was that the car was imported from South Africa; Mercedes-Benz never sold the eight-valve version of the 2.3-litre M102 four-cylinder in the UK. The second potential issue was that the factory instrument cluster including 'km/h' speedometer had been changed to a UK market 'mph' dial set.

Thankfully, the UK's Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) keeps online records of every car's MOT history, so I could easily see when the clock was changed – in 2011 at the equivalent of 100,000 miles, as it turned out. And I could also verify the mileage up to the last MOT in March 2016, which worked out at 110,000 miles.

My biggest concern, however, was that the car was a Cat D write-off, having received minor headlight and bumper damage a few years ago. Despite how many of us feel about these groundbreaking Mercs, with their multi link rear axle and aerodynamic profile, insurance companies simply view them as old cars worth little salt. So it was reasonable to believe things were not as bad as they perhaps appeared.



△ Optional fabric sports seats with bigger bolsters.

▷ Clock change in 2011, mileage now stands at 110,000.



I managed to track down the car's factory data card through Mercedes-Benz South Africa, and confirmed that it was a pukka Sportline model

Sensing the car's potential, and curious to find out whether the 134bhp 2.3-litre motor could hold a candle to the brawny 2.6 (158-164bhp), I quickly arranged a viewing with the cheery

▽ The 2.3-litre, eight-valve M102 with 134bhp.



owner-seller. In the meantime, I also managed to track down the car's factory data card through Mercedes-Benz South Africa, and could confirm that it was a pukka Sportline model with option code 953 for the 'Sportline package'. The spec sheet also confirmed code 653 for sports chassis and eight-hole alloy wheels, plus front and rear sports seats (in cloth), a 390mm diameter sports steering wheel, and gearshifter in leather.

Further sweetening the deal was a central locking system with immobiliser, anti lock brakes, undershields (since removed, sadly!) and air conditioning (which blows reasonably cold air to this day). After learning all that, suddenly the Cat D status didn't seem so bad...

SPORTS STAR

My date with destiny arrived and first impressions of the car were smile-inducing. The Sportline stance with factory rear spoiler looked tremendous, and the thickly bolstered sports seats cried 'Jump aboard!'. It was also pleasing to unlock a Mercedes of this age with a ▷



▷ proper key fob, which formed part of the immobiliser package – the spare fob also present. The bodywork carried a few marks, and a repaint job on the offside doors to cover key marks ‘added’ while the car lived in London was poor. But the Sportline branded

Further research revealed that the clutch and timing chain had been replaced recently

gearlever was all the incentive I needed to drive it.

The eight-valve engine started immediately after turning the key in the ignition,

sending a wonderful and unexpected bark through the aftermarket (yet standard looking) exhaust system. In short, the car drove just how I hoped it would. Although not as creamy in delivery as the six-cylinder, the four-pot felt very nearly as strong with 147lb ft of torque coming into play at 3,500rpm, the 0-62mph time a scant 10.3 seconds. The gearbox was a delight to use and the car steered and stopped with more poise and precision than your average 190E.

The icing on the cake was a bulging history folder, complete with original sales invoice for one Mrs L Smit, made out by Cargo Motor Corporation Limited in Germiston in July 1993;



▷ **Original sales invoice (1993) part of huge history file.**

▷ **Sportline gearknob and 390mm steering wheel.**

W201 production ended in Bremen in August – more on that topic next month.

Mrs Smit brought the car to the UK in 1999 when she relocated here, and clearly thought nothing of forking out big sums for maintenance jobs at official Mercedes dealers. Further investigation work revealed the clutch and timing chain had been replaced quite recently. All good signs, and pretty much sealing the deal once the seller had budged on the asking price. With a shake of the hand, suddenly I was the owner of a 1993 190E 2.3 Sportline!

THE ACID TEST

It was then with some trepidation that I stopped off at nearby Prestige Car Service in Hampshire to discover more about what I’d just bought. Up on the ramps, feedback from Olly Stoner was largely positive, excepting residue on the top of the radiator (that is yet to translate into any sort of overheating), and rear jacking points which need attention to avoid a potential MOT failure in March. Corrosion had also eaten a small hole in a rear wheelarch.

Luckily, a rattling sound was traced to a loose exhaust bracket, which had allowed two joining pipes to fall out of alignment. A two-minute job to fix.



△ It was a relief to find the fuel pump in good condition.

▷ Replacing the ball joints is also on the to-do list.

▷▷ Loose exhaust bracket was soon put right again.



▽ A sportier ride and handling with Sportline spec.

Since then, I've fitted a brand new bonnet star and replaced the plastic grille slats. My original plan was to replace the entire grille including chrome surround, but the factory item is £400 and the aftermarket knock-off I eventually bought on eBay was downright woeful. In the end, I reasoned that keeping the original chrome surround, which is still in good nick, was a better idea anyway.

I've also shampooed the fabric seat upholstery and gained new appreciation for its excellent overall condition. The grubby sports steering wheel has been cleaned too, in preparation for refurbishment using a kit from Liquid Leather. And once the car goes into winter storage, it will sit under a lightweight breathable cover I sourced from Classic Additions for £100 – but not before I've treated the greying body trim with Autoglym's Bumper & Trim gel.

Even with my miniscule budget, I was hoping to prove that you can still buy an older Mercedes that's useable and just a bit special, in keeping with the spirit of this magazine. Exceptionally rare in the UK, I think this manual equipped 190E 2.3 Sportline does just that! I've already put a few hundred miles under its wheels and love it more every time we hit the road. Long may the good feelings last. 🚗



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LOOKING FORWARD

Winter has well and truly arrived, but Martin Buckley sees no reason to stop enjoying his straight-six powered Mercedes roadster

WORDS & IMAGES **MARTIN BUCKLEY**

FACTSHEET

CAR 1996 R129 SL320

OWNER Martin Buckley

LOCATION Gloucestershire, UK

PURCHASED May 2014

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT

New under bonnet sound deadening pad, putting some miles on the car during the next few months



LOOKING THROUGH the history, I see we will have owned the SL320 for three years come next spring. Apart from the incident with the rear bumper (John, my father-in-law, had a 'senior moment' and ripped it off with the tow bar of his motor home), the main job has been replacing the front wishbones. I also got him some new under bonnet sound deadening material for the car and we spent an hour sticking it to the inside of the bonnet. The original cladding had either disintegrated or was being eaten by something while the SL was not being used.

When John goes away this year for his six-month sojourn in Spain, we have decided that rather than store the car we will continue to use it, the theory being that it tends to develop irritating electrical problems if left sitting; you might remember the fun and games we had with the power roof last spring.

My wife Mia is looking forward to driving the SL on the occasional nice

winter day with the top down, which means the hardtop will have to stay on its trolley. That niggles me, as it tends to get in the way in my shed. It is very heavy and I'm conscious that it might get damaged. I happen to prefer the car with the roof on (it looks better and there's no scuttle and screen shake) but I'm probably in a minority here.

△ **Martin admits to preferring the car with the roof in place.**

▽ **Report on the wheel wobble coming in our March 2017 issue.**

▽▷ **The SL320 has a suitable storage area but won't stay there.**



Rather than store the car we will continue to use it, the theory being that it tends to develop problems if left sitting

INVESTMENT POTENTIAL

Our American correspondent digs deep into his pockets to fund the purchase of a well known modern classic Mercedes-Benz super saloon, which was co-developed with Porsche in the 1980s

WORDS & IMAGES **REED HITCHCOCK**



“My car is one of seven US spec ‘124.036s’ delivered in Cabernet Red”

**NEW
ARRIVAL**

▷ Being an early 1992 car this V8 musters 322bhp and 354lb ft.

I HATE SAVING money. The idea of squirrelling money into a bank and waiting for it to grow organically just works against my basic wiring. Sure, we’ve got a small ‘rainy day’ fund in case something horrific happens, and we do try to save a little for retirement, but with interest rates on the average savings account hovering near 0.25 per cent, and the cost to borrow money at an all time low, it seems to me that there are far more interesting ways to save cash. So I hatched a savings plan of my own: the vehicular plan.

First things first, I had to convince my wife. She frequently goes on about us



needing to save more money, and my plan meant structured savings: a fixed portion of our income would be allocated to an investment that, while not liquid, could be liquidated. I argued that careful choosing of the right car with the right history would increase the odds that repairs would be few and far between, and would also mean more potential for an increase in value when the time does come to cash out. To my utter amazement, she went for it.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

I took a loan with a 60-month term at 2.9 per cent and a ‘blank cheque’ spending limit of \$48,000 (£38,000). I didn’t ask for more because I’ve never

FACTSHEET

CARS 1992 W124 500E/2011 S1212 E350 4Matic Estate/2013 W212 E350 BlueTEC

OWNER Reed Hitchcock

LOCATION Virginia, USA

PURCHASED August 2016/May 2014/July 2015

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT

Reed buys another E-Class, but this one has a V8

spent even close to that much on a car, and as a first time endeavour I didn't stand a snowball's chance in hell of getting my wife to agree to more.

The list of candidates was even easier. I think all car enthusiasts keep a mental list of cars they'd like to own, so I started with that and tried applying my criteria for investment cars. At the top of the list was an air cooled Porsche 911. I've always wanted one, but unfortunately they trade for about half again where they should be. Basically, like happened with my 6.3, my Pagoda, my M3, and countless others, I missed the bubble. Prices may normalise at some point, but for now the 911 is out.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE?

So I went back to my roots and scoured the collector Mercedes-Benz catalogue. There are a lot of neat Mercs from my formative years – 6.9s, C126 SECs, even interesting tuner cars like AMG W124s – but none of them spoke to me. Well, none excepting the W124 500E. The 500E tells a great story: a sleeper saloon in the tradition of the 6.3 and 6.9 but without the AMG brand. The keen observer would no doubt take note of the 500E's widened arches, low stance, special lights, and four-place seating. And of course, there is the Porsche connection. The 124 is the only series jointly engineered and produced by the two companies, and many consider it the first four-door Porsche. I genuinely believe that 500Es are at the bottom of the curve and headed up – and I hope so, because I've bought one.

My car is one of seven US spec '124.036s' delivered in Cabernet Red. It spent its life in sunny, dry Southern California until I bought it and brought it back east, where it resides comfortably in my garage. The first owner had the car for 22 years, and the second owner for just two. Between them there were receipts back to the very first oil change totalling over \$54,000 in maintenance (which I have compiled into a handy-dandy spreadsheet).



Widened arches are the 500E's signature; AMG monoblocks size 18-inch.



△ This 500E set its first owner back over \$82,000.

▷ The very sturdy cabin will respond well to a clean.



▷ There's just over 160,000 miles on the odometer.

▷▷ Five-litre V8 linked to a four-speed automatic.



▽ Californian licence plate part of its past life.



The very best low mileage examples will ultimately appreciate the most, but I was not prepared to spend upwards of \$45,000 (£36,000). Instead I set a limit of \$20,000 (£16,000) for my 500E, and was

pleased to bring this car home for slightly less. It's not perfect, wearing just over 164,000 miles and having been repainted with expensive Glasurit paint last year to make up for some cracking due to the California sun. Fortunately the interior shows no similar signs of sun damage.

The car does require a few minor tweaks here and there: proper European headlights (or at least correct lenses on the US units), the centre console wood between the rear seats is cracked, and it could do with detailing. I installed new floor mats when the car arrived, as the car came with ugly old mats that looked and smelled just awful.

Overall, it is a very nice driver that has been tended to every step of the way, and one that I look forward to enjoying occasionally for the next five years – unless something better comes along! 🍀

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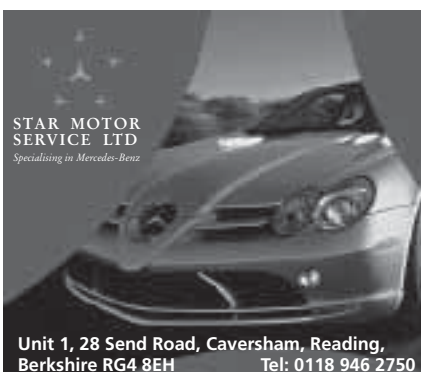
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190E 2.6 1989, Smoke Silver, automatic, stainless exhaust, sunroof, new Pirelli all weather tyres, 99,000 miles, MOT June 2017, immobilise, owned for seven years, excellent condition. £2,200. Tel: 07925 898061. **[ABP11]**



S320 CDI L 2005, immaculate, long-wheelbase version, Brilliant Silver, light grey leather, genuine 66,200 miles, MOT 20/06/17, service history, sat nav, electric sunroof, electric heated seats, parking sensors, climate control, cruise control, alarm, alloys, electric folding mirrors, CD, two keys. £7,495 ONO Tel: 0141 7764341. Kirkintilloch, Scotland. **[ABW5]**



C180 Kompressor Estate
Auto, year 2008, very low mileage, 35,500 miles, silver, one previous owner, FSH, immaculate condition, asking price £8,450. Tel: 01243 266982. West Sussex. **[ABW10]**



R129 SL320 V6, 2000/W reg, 71,000 miles, huge service file, MOT until August 2016, Panoramic hardtop, refurbished soft top (2015), all the usual refinements on the SL, leather interior, electric windows, seats (memory settings) roof, mirrors, heated seats, which all work superbly. Included are the wind deflector and a stand for the hardtop when storing in the summer. All brochures and handbooks present. Last year I spent almost £2,000 to get this iconic car where it is today. This included a roof refurb, painting bumpers, tyres and servicing all carried out by professional companies. The car drives faultlessly. I have angenuine reason for the regrettable sale. £12,995. Tel: 07826 646998. West London. **[FGW3R]**



W126 260SE Extremely rare manual car, possibly only one in UK, two owners from new in 1989, lovely condition, £5,000 of receipts over the last 18 months - most look like genuine M-B parts, drives beautifully, interior and exterior in very good condition, no bolster wear, a very rare car and opportunity, offers in region of £5,000. Tel: 07876 234595. Glasgow. **[ABW6]**



260E Auto, 1991 an opportunity to purchase a rare W124 Mercedes 260E, a really nice example of this model with any inspection welcome and any spotted issues rectified before delivery, average and advised mileage of just over 6,000 per annum, drives like a dream. £7,995. Tel: 01706 878122. **[ABW9]**



W140 300SEL Black, grey leather interior, long-wheelbase, excellent condition, 30,700 miles, one previous owner. Please call Michael. Tel: 07707 637846. Slough. **[ABW8]**



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S280 1998, 11,300 miles from new, silver with black leather, two owners (first owner August 1998 to January 2016), climate control, cruise control, electric seats, parking sensors front and rear, heated seats, polished alloys, extensive service carried out January 2016. Tel: 07557 023446. Wiltshire. **[LAW14R]**



300E Excellent condition inside and out, electric sunroof and radio, all electric, leather interior, same owner for 20 years, fully serviced with history, original sales documents, 4x excellent tyres, 12 months MOT, 140,000 miles, no known faults. £6,000 ONO. Tel: 01959 522962. Shoreham (near Sevenoaks) Kent. **[ABW1]**



190E Automatic 121,000 miles part service history full MOT, stunning interior with not bad bodywork, just could do with two new front wings to get it in excellent condition, original first aid kit triangle mats and mud flaps. £1,400. Tel: 07727 203626. Cambridge. **[ABW4]**



200E 1993, 145,431 miles, rare investment opportunity, a very nice clean example of this model and year, drives like a dream, any inspections welcome. £3,995. Tel: 01706 878122. Lancashire. **[LAW12R]**



CL500 2002 reg, FMBSH, nine stamps, 108,000 miles, MOT till April 2017, black metallic, saffron leather, walnut trim comand with TV (analogue) and sat nav, cruise control, parking sensors, bi-xenon auto lights, Bose sound system, Keyless-Go, £5,200. Tel: 0191 2575631 or Mob: 07885 726072. North Shields. **[CMI7W5R]**



450SL 1973, truly unique, recent cosmetic restoration inside and out, 91,000 miles, lots of invoices, past MOTs to prove mileage, hardtop with matching leather headlining, new canvas hood, MOT 2017, offers invited over £22,500. Seen in *ME* Nov '16. Tel: 07748 757243. Brighton. **[ABW12]**



300TE 1989, automatic, Diamond Black, 170,000 miles, tatty with a few faults but a decent runner, MOT Aug 2017, FSH, would suit enthusiast, prices now appreciating, needs money spending on it, hence only £1,500. Tel: 0777 3783025. SE London. **[LAW3R]**



190SL LHD, 1961, complete matching numbers (inspected by M-B UK) and every number matches the original build sheet, full documentation included, Light Blue original body colour (DB317), magnolia leather interior, dark blue soft top and contrasting white 'large window' hardtop, this car has just been fully restored including engine out, fully stripped body, new correct weave carpets, new leather, new soft top, new rubbers, new chrome work etc. The engine was rebuilt circa 3,000 miles ago with Weber carburettors, the extensive restoration was carried out by a M-B specialist and is fully documented with over 100 photographs showing the detail of the restoration, convertible, hard/soft tops, manual gearbox, this is a beautiful fully restored masterpiece, UK registered. £149,995. Call Mark on Tel: 07711 630348. Essex. **[LAW8]**



500SEC 1989, Champagne with mushroom leather, private Mercedes numberplate, 10 months MOT, full service book, outstanding totally original condition, guaranteed insurance valuation £11,000 will accept £8,500 OVNO. Tel: 01443 20590. Cardiff. **[LAW11R]**



SLK230 Kompressor Automatic, 2000 reg, immaculate, metallic silver paintwork, rare black/red leather interior, genuine 60,000 miles, unmarked alloy wheels, new MOT. £3,450. Tel: 07540 333433. **[LAP9R]**



300SL Beautiful car, drives faultlessly, MOT till 2017, lots of service history, AMG alloys, hardtop included in sale, recent respray at cost of £1,200, first to see will buy, £6,795. Tel: 01784 558662. Shepperton, Surrey. **[LAW7R]**



E300 Estate for sale, last of the good ones, low mileage, great condition, 12 months MOT and tax. Tel: 07544 518573 Sevenoaks. **[LAW4R]**

CLK350 Cabriolet Avantgarde This car is mint in condition and is not to be mixed up with other CLKs of similar age, FMBSH, continentals all around, just serviced. Tel: 07970 108951. Solihull. **[LAR]**



SLK230 My 87-year old mum's 2000 SLK230 (licence revoked); genuine 41,000 miles, service history, four new Michelin tyres, new alternator and battery, roof mechanism perfect, £400 spent on bodywork, new key, super little car, for photos please email. Tel: 0121 7441644. Email: bill.whitehouse@mail.com. Solihull, West Midlands. **[LAW6R]**



190E 2.6 Auto, silver, one family owned and low mileage, in splendid condition, new tyres, new silencers and long MOT, even the dealers shooting stick is in the boot, drives impressively. £3,250. Tel: 01884 33227 Mob: 07870 553153. Exeter. **[LAW2R]**



CLK320 Lovely, low mileage CLK in blue, good condition, great drive and very reliable, all bills and service book. 69,000 miles, reduced to £3,500. Tel: 07867 641290. Betchworth. **[CM18W26R]**



R129 SL300-24 1991, 68,000 miles with supporting history all old MOTs, hardtop, rear seats, excellent leather seats, AMG alloys with new front tyres, new mohair hood, excellent all round condition £6,750. Tel: 07968 512298. Upper Norwood, South London. **[CM18W25R]**



260E AMG An opportunity to buy a piece of Mercedes history, this classic 1987 eye-catching car is offered for sale due to retirement abroad, with a full years MOT this car is in very good condition and invites viewing, the car has been in my ownership for fourteen years amid used sparingly which explains the relatively low millage of 127,000 miles. With fully automatic transmission the ride pleasure you would expect from this model makes it a joy to drive, and with its distinctive Mercedes lines and outstanding white and chrome it will always get noticed and admired, the black leather interior contrasts, beautifully with this finish and is in superb condition. Offers in the region is of £6,500 or sensible offers are invited and viewing is highly recommended, this item is available for cash on collection. Tel: 07975 565573. Clacton On Sea. **[LAW5R]**



W114 250 1972, 56,000 miles, petrol, four-speed auto, tax exempt, Terracotta Red, original factory colour, leatherette interior, power steering, I have the original certificate from MB confirming build year. The car was garaged for most of its life, and when I bought it two years ago it hadn't moved for 10 years. Got her running and carried out minor welding for the MOT, plus fitted complete new exhaust system and it was back on the road. Engine runs perfectly. I replaced the fuel pump hoses and belts, starts runs and drives, the carbs could do with balancing, needs two new wings, and nearside headlight due to someone reversing into her. Perfect project car. All inspections welcome £2,800. Maidstone, Kent. **[CM18W24R]**

Mercls for sale



R129 SL300-24 1991 Nautic Blue, matching hardtop and mohair hood cream leather, rear seats, FSH, MOT until August 2017, 126,000 miles, hardtop stand, cherished number, outstanding example. £8,500. Arundel. Tel: 07979 308433. **[CM18W17R]**



500SL 1980, 98,000 miles, FSH, invoices, MOT until August 2017, currently owned, 16 years by retired MD of M-B agency, Thistle Green, brown leather, mohair hood, hardtop and stand, cruise, ABS, alloys, new tyres, e/windows, garaged, original and pristine. £18,500. Tel: 07979 308433. Arundel. **[CM18W18R]**



280SE 3.5 Cabriolet LHD, rare, 1969, 70,000 miles, ex Nigel Cooper 1997, exact factory conversion of a 3.5 original coupe, (indistinguishable from original, even by experts), 100 per cent buy-back guarantee (etc), reduced £20,000 for urgent sale. £88,888. Tel: 07931 554449. www.arjunauto.com. Kent. **[CM18W14R]**



E220 Coupe Rare, rust free, 1995, Azurite Blue with undamaged mushroom hide interior, lovely condition and drives faultlessly, FSH, huge history file, MOT 03/17. £3,500 OVNO. Tel: 07891 792423. Bognor Regis. **[CM18W7R]**



SLK320 Metallic silver with black leather interior, V6 engine, auto/paddleshift gearbox, 62,000 miles, first registered September 2001, facelift model, three owners (other than dealer), serviced by MB specialist with invoices, this SLK has just had all rust removed and new wing fitted, plus sides resprayed (photos available), it has electric seats, electric wing mirrors, CD/radio, a/c, tracker, auto/manual five-speed gearbox, and alloy wheels with new tyres, so the car looks immaculate, all original tools and safety kit, new handbook in original wallet, all invoices available to show recent renovation, taxed, MOT to April 2017. £4,250 OVNO. Tel: 01379 384949. Suffolk. **[CM18W10R]**



190E Only 42,000 miles, 1993, gold with beige interior, serviced every year super condition, original radio, electric aerial, manual sunroof, new tyres, only the second set from new, drives as when new, have lots of photographs, offered sensible price £4,400 ONO. Tel: 01674 662123. Scotland. **[CM18W8R]**



230E 2.3-litre, 1991, four-door, 80,000 miles, petrol, full service history, metallic blue, two owners, refurbished alloys with matching tyres, spare keys, book pack, electric roof, rust free genuine clean classic. £3,300. Tel: 07712 825167. Sheffield. **[CM18W6R]**



S320 CDI Metallic silver with light blue leather interior, 80,800 miles, first registered January 2002, two owners (other than dealer), owned by me since 2007, serviced by Mercedes specialist with all invoices, this S-Class is 'fully loaded with extras', including Comand sat nav, multi functional steering wheel, on board computer, electric roof, electric mirrors, memory seats and mirrors, auto opening and soft close boot, pop up rear seat headrests, self dipping mirrors, two sets of interior carpets, two sets of keys with remotes, alloy wheels with nearly new tyres, all original tools and safety kit, all original instructions, handbook, service history in Mercedes leather wallet, taxed, MOT'd to July 6 2017. £4,250. Tel: 01379 384949. Suffolk. **[CM18W9R]**



SL500 Jasper Blue metallic with cream leather and chestnut wood trim, only two owners from new, 60,900 miles with full Mercedes-Benz service history, last serviced at 58,843 on 9/11/15, MOT until 31/3/17, bi-xenon headlights, soft closure for boot, Bose sound system, satellite navigation (that works!) heated memory seats with lumbar supports, 18-inch alloys in perfect condition with new Pirelli P Zero Rosso tyres, front and rear park sensors, two remote keys. Call Brian Tel: 020 8500 4065 or Mob: 07817 166137. Chigwell, Essex. **[ABW13]**



S124 E220 Estate 1996/N reg, Azurite Blue, 205,000 miles, auto, seven seater, great condition, current owner for 16 years, 100 per cent FSH, immaculate 15-hole Mercedes alloys, recent new front wings, grey cloth interior, walnut dash, original leather steering wheel, fully working air con, original Blaupunkt stereo. £4,250 ONO. Tel: 07917 024622. Ipswich. **[CM18W5R]**



SLK32 AMG 2002, silver, black leather, MOT till March 2017, two owners, 104,000 miles, full Mercedes-Benz service history, immaculate condition throughout, 1 of 263. £9,995. Tel: 07907 797890 or Email: sgurdere@hotmail.co.uk Kent. **[CM18W4R]**



SLK32 AMG 2001, black paint, black and cream leather, MOT till May 2017, 95,000 miles, full Mercedes-Benz service history, excellent condition throughout, 1 of 263. £8,495. 07907 797890 or Email: sgurdere@hotmail.co.uk Kent. **[CM18W3R]**



C250 D Silver, P reg, fully automatic, intercooled, runs like a dream, 313,000 miles, service history available, spares or repairs. POA. Tel: 01959 532116 or Email: generalrushmore@yahoo.co.uk. Kent. **[CM18W1R]**

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560SEC 1990, blue-black, grey leather, MOT till February 2017, 191,000 miles, one owner since 1997, FSH, extensively maintained, excellent all round condition. £9,995. Tel: 07907 797890 Email: sgurdere@hotmail.co.uk Kent. **[CM18W2R]**



320CE Cabriolet Very rare, 5-speed manual, 1993, 129,000 miles, mushroom leather with blue piping, CD player, dry use for last seven years, £15,000 ONO. Tel: 01348 874495. Pembrokeshire. **[KLW9R]**



E320 1995, ex Charles Ironside and MB Club member owned, FMBSH, Tourmaline Green, full mushroom leather, maintained regardless of cost, excellent condition, MOT'd until 29/06/17, 105,170 miles. £5,000 ONO. Tel: 0151 931374. Liverpool. **[KLW8R]**



420SL 1987, 121,000 miles, MOT till Oct 2017, FSH, bought from The SL Shop in 2013, only 2,000 miles since then. £17,500. Tel: 01260 277053. Cheshire **[KLW7R]**

S210 300TD 1999, only 3,000 miles from new, second owner, this car is as new, it is an elegance model a lovely red metallic must be best in the country, auto, boot spoiler, CD changer, electric windows, last of the straight-six turbo diesels. A 210-series model. £15,000. Tel: 07979 006189. Biddenden, near Ashford, Kent. **[LAR]**



230CE Automatic, pillarless coupe drives well engine gearbox windows, all work well, bonnet has a square of lacquer off 1989 with private plate, will make a nice everyday drive, call for details. Tel: 07831 763165. Essex. **[KLW6R]**



C32 AMG Estate 2002/52 plate, silver with black leather interior, 80,500 miles, six stamps in service book, bodywork in good condition, interior in excellent condition, SMS light on from passenger side, loads of extras, call for more details. Tel: 07502 222047. Brighton. **[KLW4R]**

INTERNATIONAL MERCEDES



C180 Elegance 1.8 automatic, 1996, 149,000 miles, silver, NCT (MOT) until August 2017, petrol, ABS, e/windows, e/sunroof, e/ mirrors, cruise control, leather seats, upgraded wheels and xenon lights front and rear, remote central locking/alarm, new Sony car stereo, car is perfect very well maintained regardless of cost, same family owned for years, Irish road tax (£636), very strong reliable car.. This car also qualifies for classic car insurance, viewing any time Monday to Friday only, Galway city. Collection only or will meet vehicle transporter if arranged by you and upon clearing fund. Tel: 0872214767 or 00353 872214767. Co Galway, Ireland. **[CM18W15R]**



C280 1994, grandmother's car, very clean, regular service, excellent condition, low mileage 91,000 miles, garage kept, four-door, no accidents, one owner, won't be on sale long, call Frank. \$4,290. Tel: 001 8562281137. New Jersey, USA. **[LAW1R]**



Ponton pickup 1956, completely restored, fitted with a 190 petrol engine. £70,000. For more information please email me on mome.greeff@gmail.com or Tel: 0027 766811328. South Africa. **[CM18W16R]**



CLK200 Kompressor Cabriolet LHD, Spanish registration 2003 but newer model, 72,000km (45,000 miles), one owner from new, FMBSH, no accidents, non smoker, cream leather interior, metallic blue exterior, new hood, this car is immaculate and colour is eye-catching, Alicante area. New car forces sale. €13,500 (£11,500) Tel: 00349 66723405. Please email for more photos matthews3210@yahoo.com. San Miguel de Salinas, Alicante, Spain. **[ABW3]**

PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES

For sale G-Wagen LWB, E reg, abandoned project, needs a little tin work and refurbishment, offers! Also, two stainless steel bull bars from 463 G-Wagen. Tel: 01684 592126. Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire. **[AB]**



For sale M-B Alustyle roof bars for W123 or W126, with instructions and keys £45. M-B Alustyle roof bars for S123 or S124 with instructions and keys £40. Original M-B roof box with keys £50. Clip on cross rails for S124 £15. Tel: 01299 271222. Kidderminster. **[LAPIOR]**



For sale, Original injector pump from 300SL 1956 to 1964, spares or repairs, Bosch PES6KL70/120R12. POA. Tel: 01959 532116 or Email: generalrushmore@yahoo.co.uk Kent. **[CDW14]**

For sale R129 SL500 (1991), four original alloy wheels, used for only 500 miles, stored in Mercedes boxes. £250. Tel: 01274 483036 or Mob: 07771658544. West Yorkshire. **[KLR]**

For sale Model Mercedes-Benz cars, 1/18 and 1/24 scale: 1/18 SSKL 'Caracciola' (1931), 1/18 300SL Touring (1957), 1/18 300SL Roadster (1957) - all £25 each. Also 1/25 190E, 1/24 SSK (1928), 500R Roadster (1936) - all £20 each; great condition with boxes, please call for prices. Tel: 01635 49030 Newbury, Berkshire. **[AB]**

For sale Mercedes Enthusiast magazine collection November 2001 (1st edition) to April 2012 - 123 issues, complete except for three issues, Mercedes Enthusiast confirm: April 2011 (out of stock, unavailable); December 2009 and June 2011 (out of print but 'may come back in'), all in Mercedes Enthusiast yearly binders and in excellent condition, proceeds to Kenyan children's education charity. £100 or best offer by Friday December 30. Buyer collects (J5, M40) Call Douglas Tel: 07776 178028. High Wycombe. **[LAR]**

Merces for sale

For sale W113 SL Pagoda (brand new) front and rear bumpers the complete set for £1,000 (no offers). Tel: 01322 669081 or 07836 250222 **[CM14R]**

Breaking Mercedes sports, 113 and 107s. Tel: 01322 669081 or 07836 250222. **[ABC]**

NO. PLATES

TTM2

TTM2 Would look good on a MB, an Audi TT or anyone associated with The Isle of Man TT races. £12,000 ONO. Tel: 01480 830104. Cambridge. **[AB]**

MI XLE

M5 XLE

M1 XLE, M5 XLE Two great private registrations for sale. £1,250 for M1 XLE, and £750 for M5 XLE, or £1,800 the pair, both on retention, ready to go. Please contact Chris. Tel: 07827 964633 or Email chris39539@gmail.com. Highbridge. **[AB]**

OF 02 WED

OF 02 WED Great registration number to promote your wedding business. On retention, £2,500 ONO. Tel: 07852 909471 or Email: p.daniell@ntlworld.com **[LAR]**

AVI2 MER

A V12 MER Reg for sale, currently held on certificate that includes the £80 transfer fee, offers in the region of £3,500 invited. Tel: 01636 830582 or email pcuthbert250@btinternet.com. East Midlands, **[LAR]**

SK07 AMG

SK07 AMG On retention, offer invited. Tel: 07957 655677. London. **[LAR]**

A55 AMG

A55 AMG Registration number on retention £6,995 ONO. Tel: 07852 909471 or Email: p.daniell@ntlworld.com **[LAR]**

L7 GCE

L77 GCE

L777 GCE

L7 GCE, L77 GCE, L777 GCE All three registration 'hot to trot' and ready to go, ideal for someone with three cars, best offer over £5,000 secures all three. Text to: 07917 522269. North Hampshire. **[LAR]**

LC12 SLK

LC12 SLK On retention, offer invited. Tel: 07957 655677. London. **[LAR]**

WANTED

Wanted I am restoring a W189 300D Adenauer and I'm looking for a road wheel rim for same car, which is the same as model C-760x80x15 (stamped on the wheel beside the wheel nuts on the wheel rim, 1960), I look forward to any response. Tel: 00353 4582305. Dublin. **[AB]**

Wanted Mercedes-Benz W140 S280/S320 (later facelift model) in excellent condition with history if possible. Tel: 01977 620379 or Email: hswieter@aol.com. Pontefract, West Yorkshire. **[LAR]**

Wanted By private buyer, Mercedes SL500 Silver Arrow (R129) with low mileage and excellent condition. Tel: 07852 909471 or Email: p.daniell@ntlworld.com **[KLK]**

Wanted OE dust cover for R171 SLK, part number B66885009. Email: jrmiddulph@gmail.com or call Tel: 07801 427723. Stoke on Trent. **[JKR]**

MODELS, COLLECTABLES & LITERATURE



For sale Mercedes 124-series AMG estate models in 1:18 scale, available £99.50, personalised numberplates also available at no extra cost, worldwide delivery, online/telephone ordering, for more details. Tel: 07808 121013

Web: www.minimerc.co.uk. Sheffield. **[CM18W23R]**



For sale Mercedes Pagoda models available in all scales, most colours available, prices from £29.50, personalised numberplates also available at no extra cost, worldwide delivery, online/telephone ordering, for more details. Tel: 07808 121013

Web: www.minimerc.co.uk. Sheffield. **[CM18W22R]**



For sale W123 models in 1:43 scale, available in most colours, prices from £29.50, personalised numberplates also available at no extra cost, worldwide delivery, online/telephone ordering, for more details. Tel: 07808 121013



For sale Two Corgi Mercedes 300SL open roadster 303, year 1958. 600 Pullman 247 in repro boxes, 1964 to 1969. £45.00 each or £80 the pair, free postage. Tel: 0208 399 7541. **[JKW16R]**



For sale Mercedes-Benz 280SE in 1:18 scale, most colours are available, prices from £69.50, personalised numberplates are also available at no extra cost, worldwide delivery, online/telephone ordering available, for more details. Tel: 07808 121013



For sale Mercedes CMC models in 1:18 scale, please call for current models available, worldwide delivery, online/telephone ordering, for more details Tel: 07808 121013



For sale Mercedes-Benz 250 and 280 (123-series), Haynes workshop manual, 1976 to 1984, original manual, not reprint, very clean cover and pages, excellent condition, £25 new, will accept £7.50. Tel: 07399 359072. Canterbury. **[LAW13R]**

For sale Old Mercedes-Benz club badge very high quality suit badge bar of classic Mercedes £100. Tel: 01737 242333 or Email johnscanlon2@aol.co.uk. Redhill, Surrey. **[LAR]**

For sale Mercedes handbook for 1934 supercharged 500 convertible, illustrated English edition, slight wear. £950. Email johnscanlon2@aol.co.uk. Redhill, Surrey. **[LAR]**

For sale Old photos of pre-war Mercedes registration reg - BKC516 (do you know this car?). Tel: 01737 242333 or Email: johnscanlon2@aol.co.uk. Redhill, Surrey. **[LAR]**

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HIGH & MIGHTY

Eric Richardson's first G-Wagen experience left him craving more, and that's no surprise given that he drove a Brabus G500 version

WORDS & IMAGES **ERIC RICHARDSON**


“WHY DON'T YOU DRIVE THE G-WAGEN BACK?” came the words I'd been waiting to hear all day – a day that had been spent photographing a selection of cars from a private collection. The journey to the photoshoot location involved me sitting behind the wheel of a BMW Z3M Coupe, a car I've always liked the look of, simply because I like quirky designs. The drive was fun and if I had the cash available and a willingness to accept I'd groan like a rusty old hinge every time I got out of such a low car, I'd have one for a few months, just to tick one more machine off my list.

With the day's work done, all my photography gear was loaded into the client's G-Wagen. “Looks can be surprising,” he laughed as he handed me the keys. Having never driven a *Geländewagen* before, I would have been happy to experience a down at heel workhorse with a modest powered diesel engine, but this petrol version had been tweaked by Brabus.

One of just 10 right-hand drive, short-wheelbase G500s that arrived in the UK in 1999, it cost £67,500. It was immediately shipped to Brabus in Bottrop, Germany which added side steps, a new grille and alloy wheels, while upgrading the exhaust and fitting an Alpine sat nav and audio system, leaving little change from £23,000.

With the V8 burbling nicely, it was time to head out into the New Forest to sample Mercedes' brutal looking off-roader. I entered the first sweeping right hander on the assumption that it would corner as effectively as a drunken hippo, but how wrong I was. The G-Wagen remained resolutely level. I pressed the accelerator pedal into the carpet and took on the next bend with more gusto, but the result was the same: no roll, no fuss, just the feeling that this car was as capable on the road as it was over rocks and mud. Get the autobox to kick down and the G500 sprints for the horizon. Less drunken hippo, more cheetah on amphetamines.

Aware that this was someone's pride and joy, I settled down and savoured the ride. I'm no great fan of 4x4s, but on the roads of Hampshire the Brabus G500 was rapidly beginning to make me rethink my opinion. Granted, you may not want to take this one down a dried up wadi, but if the situation warranted it I'm sure the car would look after you. And if you did break something, a man in a village with an arc welder could get you going again pretty soon.

The visibility from inside the G-Wagen is incredible, thanks to the almost upright windscreen and very slim A-pillars. Not since I last jumped behind the wheel of an HGV have I had such a commanding view of my surroundings. By the end of the journey I had forgotten all about the Z3M Coupe, and instead lusted after the boxy old eight-cylinder *Geländewagen*. 



▷△ As standard, this 1999 G500's V8 made 292bhp.

▷ Leather seats and no less than three diff locks.

“With the V8 burbling nicely, it was time to head out into the New Forest”



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