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July 2015

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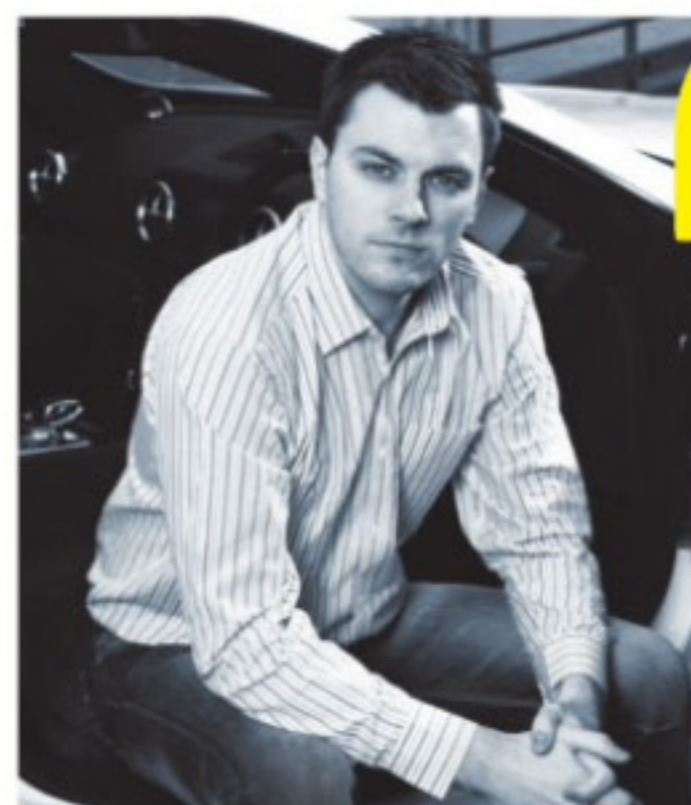
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Invited by Mercedes-Benz to drive its restored C111, the experience left me hankering after a production version

WE LOVE A GOOD MODERN CLASSICS SPECIAL ISSUE HERE AT *MERCEDES Enthusiast*. Why? Because the 1970s, 80s and 90s really were golden times at Mercedes-Benz, a period which saw new admirers drawn to the marque, and which cemented the love of owners already head over heels. Of course, the cars themselves are only part of the story. Indeed, we must take nothing away from the people behind the scenes. And that's why it was impossible to run a Modern Classics special without words from Bruno Sacco, one of the greatest car designers of his generation, and who penned some of the most recognisable models of this era. Not that he'd admit it. Talking exclusively to *Mercedes Enthusiast*, the modest Italian sheds light on a little known design study called 'SL X' or 'project X' - a car he co-designed to succeed the 300SL Gullwing.

Sadly, the Mercedes-Benz board of directors had other ideas and favoured development of the technology seen on the C111 research car. Invited by Mercedes-Benz Classic to drive its restored, 3.5-litre V8 version of the C111 for this special issue, the experience left me hankering

after a production version. I'm not the first, or the last.

The efforts of the C111's engineers were not in vain, however, as the car donated much of its technology to other Mercedes - and not just those machines used on the road. For example, the C8 and early C9 racing cars run by Sauber (see pages 84 to 86) used a derivative of the M117 V8 and turbo technology developed on C111-IV. And the C111 I drove sported multi link suspension later used on the W201 190 (discussed on pages 20 and 21). I could reveal more links between cars in this issue, but I'll let you discover them for yourself - there's quite a few!

Kyle Molyneux
Editor



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



Craig Pusey

"Over the years I've photographed a lot of Mercedes, from humble saloons to top of the range classics. But the opportunity to shoot a real icon was a dream

come true," says Craig Pusey. "The C111 is one of those cars that every Mercedes fan knows, but few have seen it in the 'real world'. It was great to capture the car as it should be seen, not parked on a plinth, but on the road, weaving through corners and flashing past trees. I hope I did the car justice!" See the results for yourself from page 36.



Reed Hitchcock

"As a 126-series junkie [proof exists on page 103], the chance to drive not one, but two 560SECs with AMG parts is the stuff of childhood fantasy,"

enthuses Reed Hitchcock. "It's always a pleasure to meet enthusiastic caretakers of the cars we love, especially when they're willing to share the experience with the likes of me! There is a character to cars like these coupes that you just don't find in the newer stuff, I think - at least not yet." Discover what Reed means from page 74.



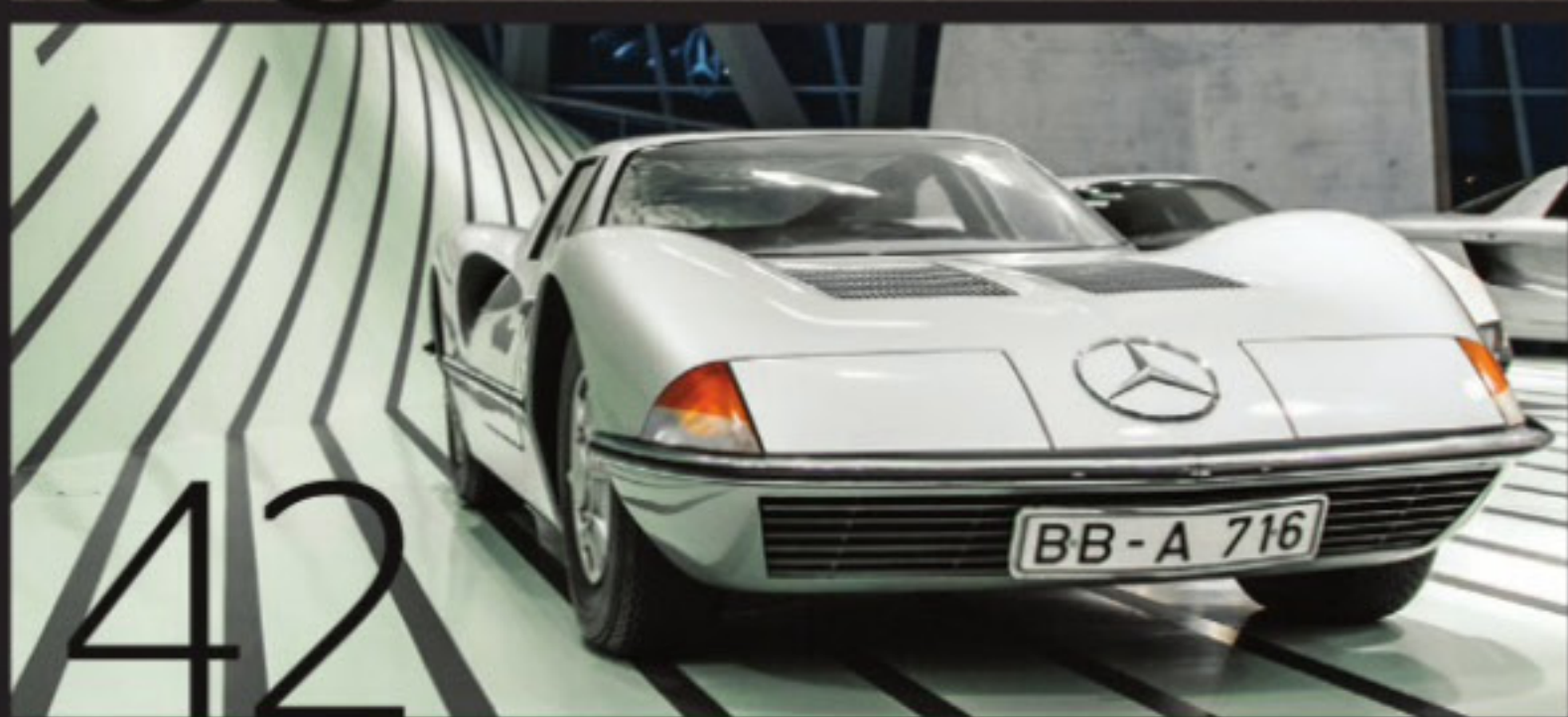
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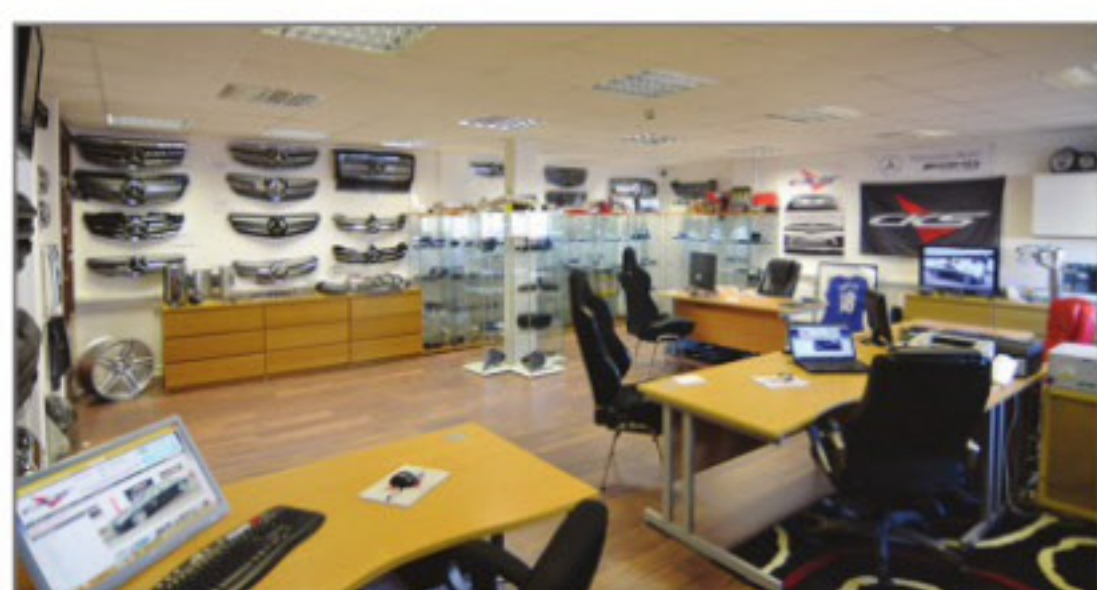
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The latest Mercedes launches, news and motorsport

NEWS

AUCTION STARS

Mercedes-Benz cars of yesteryear made tempting propositions in a recent sales event



OWN A LOW MILEAGE, 16-valve 190E? Then pay attention: a 17,700km (11,000-mile) 2.3-16 sold for a whopping £38,250 in Silverstone Auctions' May Sale. The existence of the more powerful 2.5-16 and this car's left-hand drive configuration clearly mattered little to its new owner.

Supplied new by a Mercedes dealer in Brentford in July 1986, the blue-black saloon has lived in the UK all its life, and has been meticulously maintained by its one former keeper, who kept the car's original handbook, service schedule and sales brochure.

This 11,000-mile 190E 2.3-16 went to a new home for just over £38,000!



Another highlight of the event was a 190SL barn find, which changed hands for £50,625. Laid up in 1977 with 73,000km (just over 45,000 miles) on the clock, the car was

promptly forgotten and was only recently 'rediscovered'. It was said to be in good condition, despite a lack of use, with light rust in just a few places and a red leather interior that was "almost completely salvageable".

There was no soft top, but the car – finished in Mercedes blue-grey (DB166) – did have its original hardtop. The factory Solex carbs were replaced with Webers at some

point in the car's life, and although the engine had seized, that doesn't mean it's dead in the water. It promised to be an interesting project for someone with enough patience and money.



This fabulous 190SL barn find sold for £50,625, its body solid but needing paint.



SILVERSTONE AUCTIONS

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W123 ON STAGE

A W123 Mercedes-Benz is enjoying a starring role in the English National Opera's *Carmen* production, which opened at the London Coliseum on May 20. Chosen for its "reputation as a reliable workhorse... and its connection with the underworld, being the preferred choice of smugglers and gangsters", the W123 280E fits right into the world of *Carmen*.

"A passionate tale of lust, seduction and betrayal, no other opera boasts as popular a following as Bizet's *Carmen*," reckons its producer. "Set during the dying days of Franco's Spain, Calixto Bieito's acclaimed production of this must-see opera has been enjoyed by audiences across Europe."

Carmen will be broadcast live from the London Coliseum to cinemas across the UK on July 1, and production runs to July 3. For more details about this stage show, including ticket prices, see www.eno.org.

VÄTH'S E500

German tuner Vath has released details of its stonking new V50RS, based on Mercedes' E500. Starting with 402bhp and 442lb ft torque, Vath's engine remap, new intercooler and exhaust system endow the 4,663cc V8 biturbo with 542bhp/612lb ft of torque. The car's top speed is raised to 185mph.

All of the above comes in at €10,591 (around £7,800), and Vath will also tune your E-Class's Airmatic suspension for improved handling for an additional €1,166 (£850). An E-Class front brake upgrade consisting of 390mm discs, six-piston calipers, 'highly efficient' pads, Castrol SRF brake fluid and steel brake hoses is available for €5,355 (£3,900).

Visual upgrades include 20-inch, three-piece forged alloys from €1,485 per wheel (£1,100) and a carbon bootlid spoiler for €1,761 (£1,300). These and interior accessories can be found at www.vaeth.com.



WIRELESS CHARGING

Qualcomm Technologies is collaborating with Daimler on its Wireless Power Transfer 2.0 high performance program for electric vehicles. The Qualcomm Halo WEVC technology could allow Mercedes customers to charge their electric vehicles (EV) and plug-in hybrid EVs without ever having to plug them in.

TRANSCEND DRIVEPRO 220

Transcend has announced a new addition to its successful dashboard camera range. Called the DrivePro 220, the device allows users to record each journey in full HD (1080p) and automatically save footage, which could prove useful to your insurance provider and/or police investigations should you be involved in an accident.

Key features include a built-in battery, 2.4-inch display, F1.8 lens aperture, day and night filming capability, a GPS receiver, emergency recording and a snapshot function.

New for the DrivePro 220 model is a Lane Departure Warning System and Forward Collision Warning System, plus a Speed Alarm and Parking Mode, which uses motion detection technology to automatically start recording when the sensor detects movement around the stationary vehicle.

A DrivePro App is available for Apple iOS and Android devices, which allows you to view live footage, play back and download videos on your smartphone using the DrivePro's in-built Wi-Fi connectivity.

Awkward charging point aside (the charging wire bends back on itself on the way to your car's 12V socket), the DrivePro 220 device is a dream to use, mounted on your car's windscreen with an adhesive pad and automatically starting recording when you wake up your car's engine.

Priced at £130, the device comes with a 16gb micro SDHC memory card as standard, and boasts a very handy two-year manufacturer warranty.



△ Adhesive pad allows application to the windscreen.

NEWS IN BRIEF



△ EIGHT MILLION

The C-Class saloon and estate reached a remarkable milestone in late May, with 8m sold since 1982, when the 201-series 190 launched. The C-Class name was used by Mercedes from May 1993 with the 202-series.

□ BIG PLANS FOR V8

Mercedes Enthusiast can reveal that a detuned version of AMG's four-litre V8 will eventually take over from the current 4.7-litre V8 used in models with the '500' badge. The first to receive this new engine is the revised G500, with 416bhp, on sale later this year.



△ ASTONS TO USE 4.0

Contrary to earlier reports from some publications, we understand that Aston Martin will use AMG's new four-litre V8 biturbo engine in future models - not Affalterbach's 5.5-litre V8 biturbo motor seen in the likes of the current E63.



△ PROJECT CRASH

Mercedes is nearing completion of its highly advanced new crash test facility in Sindelfingen. Costing in excess of €100m (£70m), the new test centre measures 270x170 metres. Crash testing procedures will begin at the site in autumn 2016.



△ DTM SAFETY CAR

Mercedes-AMG's new GT S is now the official Safety Car for the DTM.

□ CORRECTION

In our last edition, we incorrectly called Lorinser's G-Wagen the G50 L, and said that it ran on 295/30ZR21 tyres. This vehicle is in fact called the Lorinser G60 L and it uses 295/40ZR21 tyres with 'RS10' 10x21 alloy wheels.



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MOTORSPORT NEWS

The A-Class stars in the BTCC, as Rosberg turns up the heat in F1 and AMGs take on the Nürburgring

BTCC



Such is the raw pace of the A-Class, it was only a matter of time before it took its first victory of the 2015 British Touring Car Championship. With Wix Racing's Adam Morgan at the wheel, the A-Class crossed the line third in the first race at Thruxton, before finishing eighth in race two. The moment of magic came in race three, Morgan winning by just 1.5 seconds!



GP3



Mercedes-Benz has given its full support to French racing talent Esteban Ocon, who won last year's European F3 title and now races in GP3.

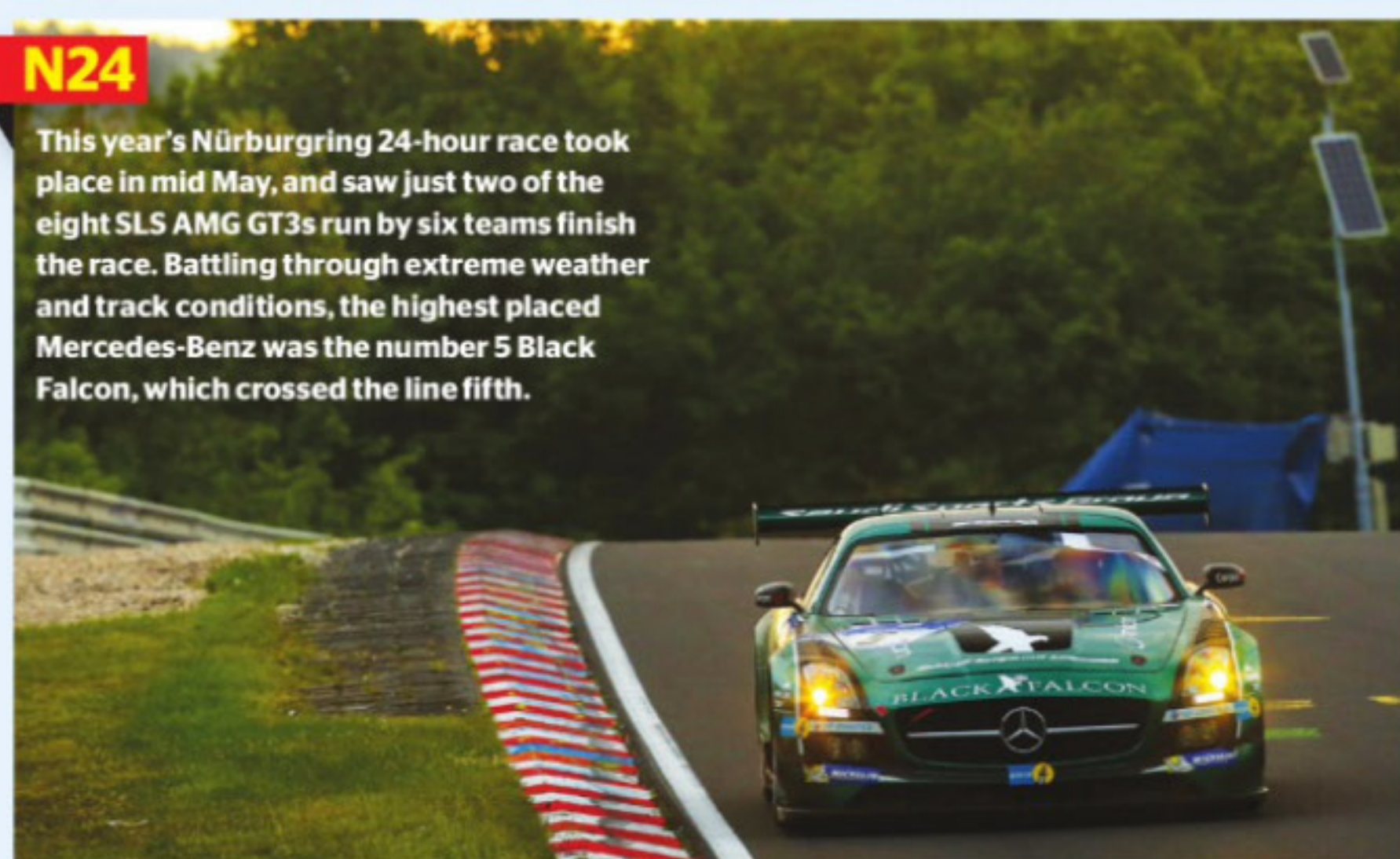
FORMULA 1



The month of May saw driver Nico Rosberg take victory in the Spanish and Monaco Grands Prix. Team mate Lewis Hamilton has signed a new three-year deal with Mercedes that will see him drive for the outfit until the end of the 2018 season.

N24

This year's Nürburgring 24-hour race took place in mid May, and saw just two of the eight SLS AMG GT3s run by six teams finish the race. Battling through extreme weather and track conditions, the highest placed Mercedes-Benz was the number 5 Black Falcon, which crossed the line fifth.



DTM



New Mercedes DTM driver Pascal Wehrlein continues to impress, finishing second in race one at Hockenheim, and fifth in race one at Lausitzring.



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Burmester audio systems complete the Mercedes-Benz cabin experience

SOUND MAN

We meet Dieter Burmester and experience the dazzling brilliance of his company's audio system for the new Maybach Pullman – Burmester now providing equipment for most of Mercedes' cars

WORDS IAN KUAH IMAGES IAN KUAH/DAIMLER AG

THERE IS A TENDENCY IN THE car audio world to talk about how many speakers and watts a system boasts. This, unfortunately, is marketing at work again, and like horsepower and torque, is only part of the story. The shape of a car's cabin and how well damped it is are also critical issues.

The laws of physics are immutable, however, and as much as you can shape the sound field with DSP [digital sound processing] algorithms, there is no escaping the fact that low frequencies require space to generate their wave lengths properly. In this respect, extra cabin length and volume are invaluable, and when I shared the rear compartment of the new Mercedes-Maybach Pullman with Dieter Burmester, I was stunned at how much better and more realistic the imaging and overall spatial experience was compared to the normal Mercedes-Maybach and regular S-Class.

Yes, the extra roof speaker module in the rear cabin helps, but the sense of realism had been ramped up to the next level, one that reminded me of the very best high end domestic audio listening experiences I have ever had. And that, I should add, was with equipment costing well over £50,000 in an acoustically treated room!

"We made some fine adjustments to the DSP algorithms to take the larger cabin volume into



△ Burmester is replacing Harman Kardon in Mercedes cars.



△ The cabin's extra volume aids the aural experience.



△ Dieter Burmester is a musician and also an engineer.

account, but apart from the extra roof speaker module, the system is essentially the same as in the normal Maybach," explained the boss of Burmester Audiosysteme GmbH.

The one area where a well executed car system scores is in the intimacy of the listening experience. With its double glazing and extra sound insulation designed to filter extraneous sounds consistently at different occupant head heights, the Mercedes-Maybach and its Pullman derivative offer the best possible chance of hearing every note emitted by this fine audio system without compromise.

HEAR TO PLEASE

Unlike rival systems, Burmester uses an analogue pre amplifier section, which clearly avoids the digital sound that can creep into powerful car audio systems, making them sound clinical, even harsh at times. Importantly, as a musician himself, Dieter Burmester insists on extensive listening throughout the development process, and this subjective set up process takes priority over whatever numbers and curves might appear on the test instruments.

Although I have enjoyed many hours of listening in various S-Class models equipped with either of the two Burmester audio systems, I was blown away by how much better the sound was in the rear compartment of the Pullman.

And I was totally captivated by the music. Ah, the music. Too often, high end car audio offers a spectacular, loud and often overwhelming hi-fi experience. But here, I quickly became immersed in the music at a level that I had always hoped factory installed car audio would one day be able to reach. This is the best and most realistic, factory car audio system I have ever heard by a country mile.

I could have sat there for hours. But I was jolted from nirvana by the PR guy informing us that our interview slot had already overrun. ■



Dieter Burmester insists on extensive listening throughout the development process

Patrick Carroll

Mercedes from the Isle of Man

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2003 MERCEDES BENZ SL500 SPORTS CAR

Metallic silver, light grey leather, AMG wheels. Full main dealer history. 22,000 miles only. Be really ready for summer £16,500



1997 MERCEDES BENZ E230 SALOON ELEGANCE

Metallic azurite blue, cream cloth interior, 8 hole alloy wheels, OTG, aircon, cruise control. One elderly owner, 38,000 miles only. Full main dealer history £3,950



1978 350SE SALOON

Silver Blue Metallic, Beige velour, electric windows, sunroof and alloy wheels. Last owner 25 years – a magnificent 2 owner car with excellent service history £8,500



1990 230CE 2 DOOR COUPE

Classic White with contrasting Black hide interior, electric sunroof. Full service history with detailed file to confirm the last owner for 20 years. Just had a major service and expenditure £3,500



1983 200 AUTOMATIC SALOON

Dark Blue, unmarked and perfect Blue cloth interior, sunroof, absolutely superb condition, full Mercedes-Benz dealer history. First owner had car for 20 years and the last for 10 years. Ready to go £6,000



2001 SL500 SILVER ARROW SPORTS CAR

ULTRA RARE No 10 of 100 LIMITED EDITION CARS. Special Silver paint finish, Black soft top, two tone Grey nappa interior including rear seat. Panoramic roof and CD system. 29,000 miles, FMBSH.... £35,000



1998 SL320 CONVERTIBLE

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Diesel, LWB saloon, Silver with Grey leather, plus all usual options. Full length panoramic roof, rear privacy glass & blinds, electric rear & seats. Magnificent car, 2,000 miles Only £42,500

1924 BENTLEY 3.0 LITRE VDP OPEN TOURER in stunning condition with magnificent history £250,000

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

THE COST OF PAPER



New road tax rules may have inadvertently improved your Mercedes' appearance, but there could be a price to pay if you're not diligent, writes **David Sutherland**

When Vehicle Excise Duty windscreen discs were consigned to history in October 2014, I was happy. On that day, I took the two tax discs out of the windcreens of our A180 CDI and ML320 CDI, and felt pleased at the small but definite improvement I thought this made to that part of the cars. I prefer cars to carry as little written paraphernalia as possible: I peel the dealer sticker off the rear window, I don't like numberplates advertising the supplying dealership (although not sufficiently to buy a replacement plain set), and as a new parent years ago never wanted to proclaim 'Baby on board!' in the rear window of our car.

It was one more move to paperless motoring that to me looked simple and logical – but unfortunately there has been trouble. It seems that some people have been blissfully unaware of the revised procedure that goes with the new VED system, and have paid dearly for it.

The vital point to be aware of is that when you sell or otherwise dispose of a car with some remaining VED, that benefit cannot now be passed on to the next owner.

This is all too easy to overlook if for years you have considered the remaining road tax, or lack of it, a factor when buying or selling a used car. 'Taxed and tested' is a phrase that anyone who has spent an unhealthy amount of time scanning the classified motoring adverts will have lodged in their brain. However, due to the

new rules, the first part of it has been meaningless for the last eight months.

It doesn't matter if you're selling, as you receive an automatic refund if you paid for your road tax in full, rather than on a monthly basis. But if when buying, you assume the remaining months stay with the car, you are driving an untaxed vehicle and heading towards a penalty.



The car was wheel clamped, so straightaway the new owner was £260 out of pocket

A few weeks ago, I read with some sympathy a newspaper story chronicling the saga and expense of someone who had been given a car by a sister-in-law who was leaving the country, and which had a tax disc valid for a few more weeks. The car was wheel clamped (this part alone informed me that while it is now illegal for private firms to clamp, local authorities can obviously still do it), so straightaway the new owner was £260 out of pocket, but to add insult to injury the clampers would not unclamp until two days later at the earliest, on the Monday.

There was also a £171 fine for not taxing the car, and to cap it all, the new owner did not have the VED reference number, and reported a two-hour phone call to the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) to obtain it so the VED could be paid.

What has happened is that while the abolition of tax discs was well publicised, with the press generating stories about obsessive tax disc collectors (one had squirrelled away over 207,000 over three decades), and how decades ago Guinness bottle

labels were, from a distance, a convincing substitute for the discs, the fact that VED would no longer be transferrable was almost completely ignored. But what is now emerging is that having considered that it gave the public sufficient information at the time, the DVLA is not minded to be lenient on those who are still unaware of that crucial aspect.

There is another aspect, too. Although, as before, the DVLA will send out a renewal form, I find I have almost lost track of when the tax on both vehicles is due, because I no longer have that visual reminder every time I walk up to them. You should also note that keeping the car off the public road – let's say you've purchased a classic – doesn't provide immunity. You don't have to tax the car, but you must fill in a Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN).

Come October and the issue will have resolved itself,

because one year on from the change, the last of the tax discs issued will have expired and no confusion should remain. But just make sure that if you buy a used Mercedes-Benz between now and then, you buy six or 12 months VED, or opt to pay for it monthly – most Mercedes are expensive enough to run without making an unnecessary contribution to the Treasury! ■

Peter Jarvis Specialising in Mercedes-Benz & Classic Cars



230SL Sports Pagoda, 1966 finished 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. £87,750



280SL Sports Pagoda, 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. £129,500



250SL Sports Pagoda, 1968, finished in the breath taking 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 MoT's/ history & invoices, handbook, looks like new. Drives superb, garaged. Remarkable car. Please view our website for more detailed pictures you will be amazed. Fantastic investment and fast appreciating in value don't miss this one. £139,500.



280SL Sports Pagoda, 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 hand book, etc. It would be very difficult to find another even come close to this. £135,750



Mercedes 300SL, 1987, Sports, unmarked signal red with cream hide interior, rear seats, headrests, hard and soft tops, overmats, tinted glass, light up vanity mirrors, power windows, central locking, stereo system, power steering, automatic, alloys, immobiliser, alarm, only 57,000 miles, with service history, garaged from new, magnificent. £26,750.



230SL Sport, 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. £89,750



280SL Sport, 1969, left hand drive, finished in Ivory White with Dark Brown hide interior, auto, power, only 68,000 miles, hard and soft tops, air-con, stereo system, two owners from new. This car is just magnificent in every way, fast appreciating in value. £67,750



560SL Sport, 1989, left hand drive, finished in Nautic Blue with Mushroom hide interior, headrests, hard top and Dark Blue soft top, over-mats, power windows, cruise control, original stereo system, air-bag, air-con, alloys, tinted glass, complete with all tools. Auto and power steering, history, 42,000 miles, garaged from new. £39,750



560SL Sport, 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. £38,500



560SL Sport, 1986, left hand drive, Astral Silver with Maroon hide interior, hard and soft tops, rear seats, air-con, cruise control, air-bags, headrests, power mirrors, light up vanity mirrors, stereo system, SRS, power windows, alloys, tinted glass, centre armrest. Only two owners, 39,000 miles, FSH. Probably the finest Mercedes sports ever. £39,750



280SL Sport, 1985, finished in Arctic White with superb interior, hard and soft tops, auto, power, Clifford alarm and immobilizer, alloys, cruise control, stereo system, CD player, power windows, service history, excellent example. £12,750



560SL Sport, 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. £46,750

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

NEW CRASH TEST FACILITY



Following years of pioneering research, Mercedes invests millions of euros in a new Technology Centre for Vehicle Safety, which will be up and running by 2016

Efficiency. It's something that's at the heart of the Mercedes-Benz brand ethos. As is safety, which is why Mercedes' announcement of a topping out ceremony for its new crash testing facility – dubbed Technology Centre for Vehicle Safety, or TFS – at Sindelfingen caught my eye.

It's easy to forget the massive investment, both financially and in time, that car manufacturers make in the process of building cars. This new facility was started in 2013 and will begin testing in 2016, and represents an investment that Mercedes-Benz describes as "triple-digit millions of euros".

The reason for this investment is obvious:

the advancement of safety systems – many pioneered by Mercedes-Benz – requires ever more rigorous testing, and the TFS allows that to happen more readily. More efficiently too, the huge building housing a 90x90m area without pillars that allows testing to be undertaken on a large scale without obstruction.

With pressure both to be environmentally and time efficient, the area is controlled climatically by using water heat from adjacent climatic wind tunnels, while the crash area allows quick turnaround of different crash rigs for anything from passenger cars to full sized commercial vehicles via rotating crash blocks with differing collapsible structures on either side. With safety systems ever more advanced, the aim of the TFS is to further investigate

developments in technology like Pre-Safe and driver assistance systems. To achieve that, Mercedes-Benz has incorporated an automated driving system for such vehicles. Post crash measuring will be largely automated too, with a turntable placing the car in front of a digital camera for quicker analysis.



There's a sled for restraint testing, while even the crash test dummies – a thankless job if ever there was one – will feature a single source cable for downloading digital data, rather than the previous analogue data.

Being based at its own production site has many advantages for model development, as does its location alongside a driving simulator, climatic wind tunnels and an aero-acoustic wind tunnel. Closer links, and as a direct result efficiencies, between areas of

research, development, planning and production will be the inevitable result.


Thomas Merker (Director for Body and Safety at Mercedes-Benz Cars Development) said, "The new Technology Centre for Vehicle Safety represents a continuation of this pioneering role. The world's most advanced crash test facility will enable us in future to carry out all crash tests on our own premises – not just more crash tests due to the growing product range, but also crash tests with future, new configurations."

Having pioneered in safety testing throughout its entire history, the TFS reaffirms Mercedes' ongoing commitment to doing so into the future. Every Mercedes-Benz model currently undergoes some 15,000 realistic crash test simulations and 150 real crash tests prior to production. Around 40 or so of these are mandatory for the various needs of worldwide homologation, but others, such as the roof drop test, are done by Mercedes-Benz without any legislative requirement to do so.

It's easy to be blasé about the enormous array of safety equipment a modern Mercedes-Benz car has, the list of safety aids and systems enough to fill pages and pages of this magazine. It's testament to the company's ongoing commitment to safety that it invests such vast sums of money, time and effort into ensuring its cars aren't just among the very best vehicles you can buy, but the safest – over and above what's required of it. Hopefully

you'll never find out just how safe the people who'll work at the TFS have made your car, but should you ever need them, it's encouraging to know that you're in very experienced hands indeed.

Where Mercedes-Benz leads, other car makers will

follow, safety standards, tests and equipment developed by the three-pointed star often adopted by other companies. So while Mercedes-Benz's investment in the TFS is certain to result in continued improvement in its own safety, its knock-on effect will be incalculable. Efficient indeed, and something any fan of the brand should be very proud of. 

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

“ Every Mercedes undergoes some 15,000 realistic crash test simulations and 150 real crash tests prior to production ”

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



LETTERS

STAR LETTER

CHEAP S-CLASS

I loved your recent article on the S-Class, and I would like to share how my dream came true with other Mercedes enthusiasts.

Last Christmas, I visited my sister and brother-in-law and there on the driveway was a beautiful, 2006 S320 in Mystic Blue (there are only three in that colour in the UK, according to the DVLA).

The car had done only 29,000 miles and was in mint condition

apart from a few stone chips and the usual scuffs on the alloys.

I was not considering another car, but as the price was lowered to £10,000 I decided to take the plunge. I'm so glad I did! It is the most beautiful car that I have ever driven, and as I am now retired after 30 years in the motor industry and have driven most of the luxury models, I can confirm that the S-Class is the finest.

As Mercedes-Benz says, "The best or nothing".

David Sellors, South Wales



DO YOU OWN THIS CAR?

Back in 2008, while on a visit to British Car Auctions, this 500SEC (see below) was up for sale, the first owner being entertainer Bob Monkhouse. I've always wanted to know what happened to the car, and I really I wish I'd bought it!

Great magazine, by the way. It's always an interesting read.

Graham Hodgkin, Hampshire

A PREMIUM PRICE

Over the course of 25 years, I have been fortunate enough to own and enjoy several Mercedes.



My current car, a C-Class estate, is my seventh Mercedes-Benz and suits all my needs – it's comfy and a joy to drive, and it still looks as good today as it did when it came out of the showroom.

However, quite recently the internal plastic door handle of this car broke, which meant the passenger door could not be opened from the inside. My car is almost six years old and only has 11,000 miles on the clock.

To my absolute astonishment, the repair bill to fix this broken plastic handle amounts to a grand

total of £871.36 including VAT and fitting. Why? Because, in the UK, Mercedes-Benz does not supply the component parts needed to repair the handle, although it does in the USA, so I have to buy a complete door card, which itself costs £582.80.

Needless to say, I declined to pay for the repair. Of course, I have always known that repair bills for Mercedes would be higher than for the average car, but this is taking the biscuit!

Pauline Marden, via email

RESTORED PONTON

The Mercedes-Benz 180D Ponton was the favoured choice of families all over Europe and considered to be the most versatile Mercedes during the 1950s and 60s. The old values of artisan craftsmanship were moulded with German engineering to produce a car that took many hours to complete. Not particularly racey, but glamorous and classy.

This model (above right) has an original OM636 diesel engine and

all the original interior trimmings, including a Becker TG radio. A meticulous restoration effort was undertaken over three years, and was recently completed for



Marriott Hotel's 'Love at First Like' bridal fair in the Philippines.

The Mercedes-Benz 180D Ponton will not win you any races, but will surely turn heads. As my dad Steve said, "It's not the miles per hour, but smiles per hour."

Tirso Padilla, via email

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TODAY!

Each month the writer of our Star Letter will receive a superb 1:24 scale model kit of a classic Mercedes-Benz from Revell! Revell model kits are available for purchase from all good toy and model retailers. For further information please visit www.revell.de/en

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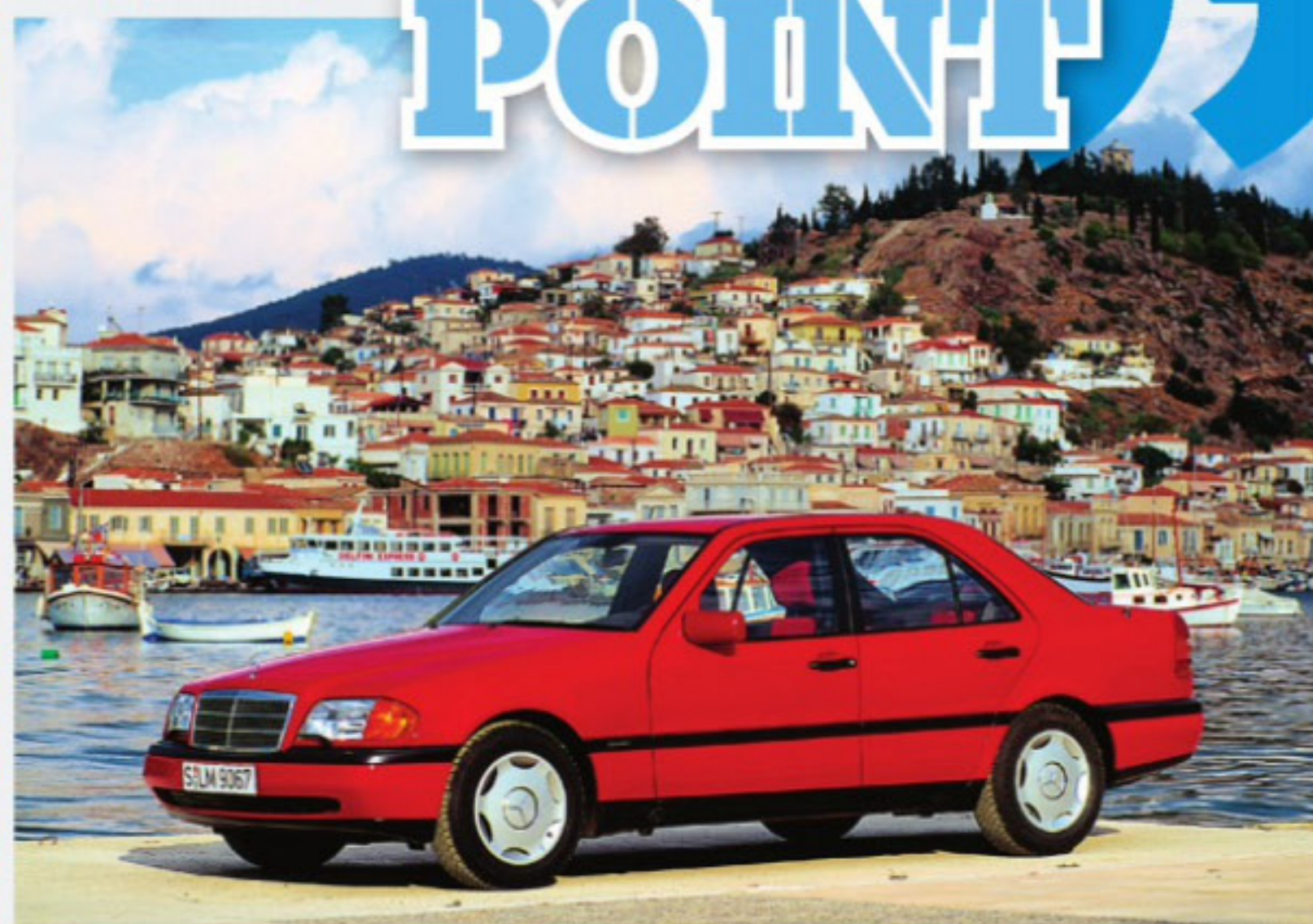
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f "It's an AMG GT with a saloon car body. What's not to like?" **Carlos El Chacal**
- Come back next month for our first UK drive of the new C63 by AMG...

f "In Blue Peter fashion, here's one I prepared earlier!" **Gordon Stewart**
- One reader showed off his W124 after seeing an image of designers working on a W124 clay model during the 1980s

TALKING POINT



This month's Talking Point...
Including the W201 190 of 1982, what is your favourite generation of C-Class?

"The W201 and specifically the 190E 2.5-16 Evolution." **Michael Arit**

"My favourite is the W202. I have an S202 C220 CDI and I love it." **José Pedro Carvalho**

"I'd have to say the W202 is my favourite. I really like the W201 but I can barely fit inside it." **Ron Yu**

"Facelifted W204 - perfect blend of style, quality and technology." **Mark Burmester**

"I love the looks of the W204 and W205, but the only C-Class I've owned is a W202 C250 Turbodiesel - my first Mercedes and sorely missed." **Gareth Caffyn**

Take part in **Talking Point** every month on Facebook and Twitter. See the bottom of page 18 for our respective websites!

MERCSPOTTER



As we discuss from page 36, Mercedes' original Gullwing was very nearly succeeded by the C111 in the 1970s. But fate dealt that car a tough hand and it took over 50 years for a full production car to emerge with the same iconic door design. A 300SL and SLS AMG were snapped together recently by Martin Zacek. "I spotted these two legends at local enthusiast gathering Cars & Croissants on Santana Row, San Jose, California. Enjoy!"

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, BR35JS.

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A look back at Mercedes that deserved more recognition for their sometimes hidden qualities - this month...

WHY I LOVE THE...

W201 190D

Following his purchase of a Mercedes toy car as a child, one motoring journalist developed a soft spot for Stuttgart's compact saloon, particularly in frugal diesel form

WORDS ALEX GRANT IMAGES DAIMLER AG

MY AFFECTION for the once ubiquitous W201 190 has a lot to do with something I have in common with it. The original 'Baby Benz' launched in the UK in 1983, which also happens to be the year I was born. Plus it's the first Mercedes-Benz I owned.

Well, sort of. The 190 in question was a Corgi German taxi picked up in an airport duty free shop before a family holiday, and is still – albeit with the roof light and a lot of its cream paint missing

– lurking somewhere in the attic. That would be the same family holiday where, clutching said die-cast car, I refused to get into a Greek minicab because it wasn't a Mercedes-Benz – something I've never lived down.

For me, the W201 is the symbol of Mercedes-Benz during an era when I was forming my lifelong interest in cars. Those clean, straight edged body lines, aerodynamic by early 80s standards, took the presence of the brand's full size luxury cars and shrunk it. As a child, it was

those ribbed rear lights and square headlamps either side of the upright chrome grille that sprung to mind when someone mentioned Mercedes-Benz – not because the W201 was a figurehead of luxury or performance, or something you'd have in poster form on your bedroom wall, but because it was the model I was most familiar with.

SOMETHING IN COMMON

That's why I still look back fondly on it. Small cars might have become bread and butter products for Stuttgart these days, but the

190 was a significant and well judged newcomer. It made up a quarter of Merc's UK sales in its first year, from a standing start, and for a substantial share of those buyers it was the first time they'd been able to afford a Mercedes.

But democratising the engineering prowess that had made the brand's luxury saloons so aspirational wasn't easy. This was the result of a £600m development programme, benchmarking the ride comfort and road holding of its larger siblings, and the Sindelfingen

"I refused to get into a Greek minicab because it wasn't a Mercedes-Benz"





JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz 190D (W201)

ENGINE OM601 1,997cc 4-cyl

POWER 74bhp@4,600rpm

TORQUE 93lb ft@2,700-3,550rpm

TRANSMISSION 5-speed manual, RWD

WEIGHT 1,180kg

0-62MPH 17.9sec

TOP SPEED 99mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 34.5mpg

YEARS PRODUCED 1983-1993

Figures for a facelifted, September 1989-on 190D with a five-speed manual transmission - cars built prior to March 1989 had 71bhp/91lb ft torque; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

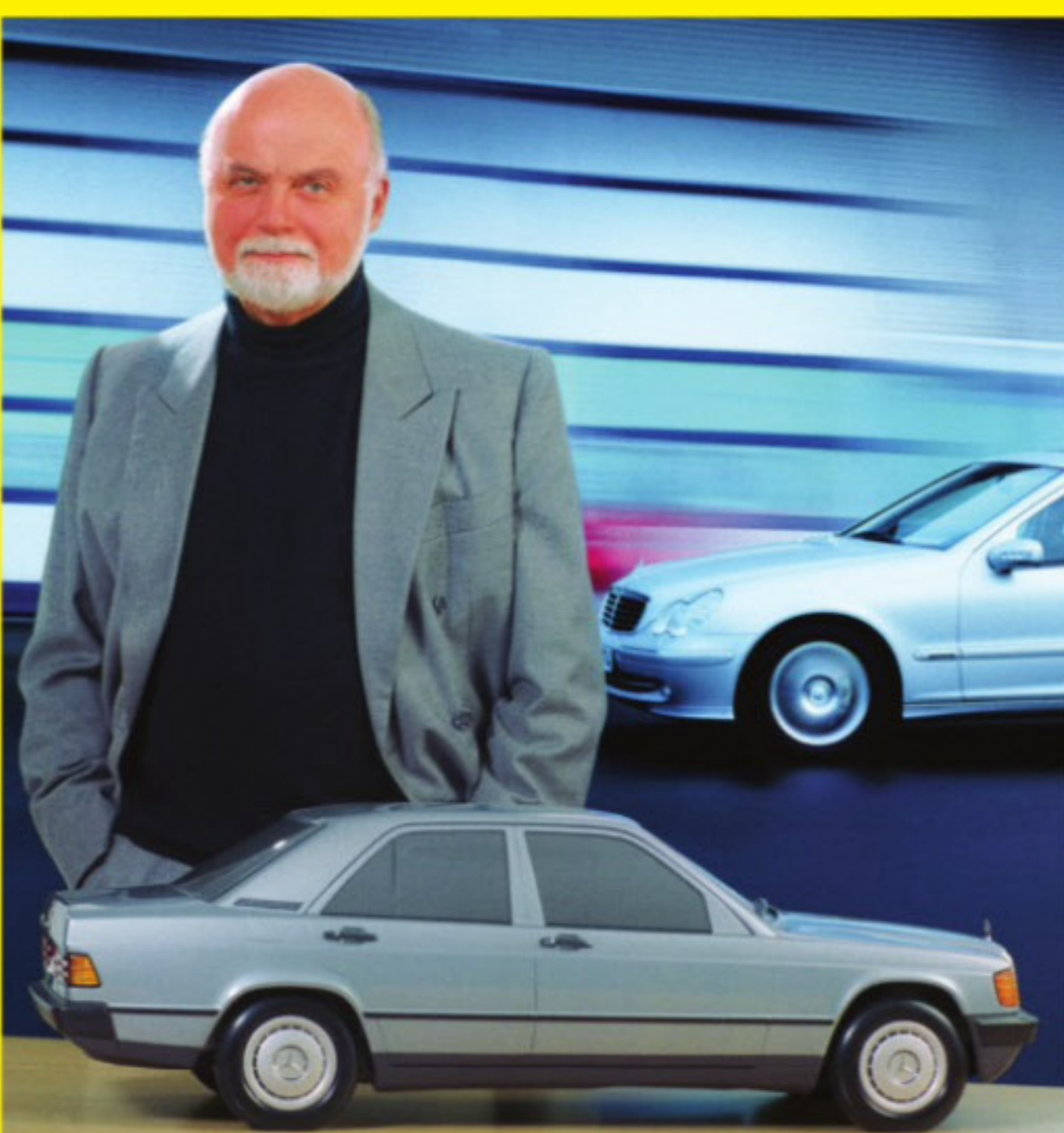
Actually, the lightweight and space conscious, five-link rear axle, and anti dive/anti squat suspension geometry was so good at its job that it became the blueprint for larger cars. As did that instantly recognisable, 1980s Mercedes-Benz styling. Visually and technologically, the 190 may have been an affordable model, but it was also cutting edge.

So why, with iconic Cosworths, DTM racers and the Evolution models to choose from, am I gunning for the oil burner? Perhaps because it's the biggest risk of all. Launched a year after the rest of the range, it added the challenge of making the all new, four-cylinder diesel engine live up to large car refinement standards. Mounting it within its own rattle reducing, isolated compartment cut clatter by 50 per cent. BMW took nine years to catch up.

SOLID STATE

Refinement and frugality aside, it was also incredibly tough. The 190D's durability is legendary, and its ability to cover hundreds of thousands of miles with minimal maintenance has made it a long surviving part of Merc's history. Albeit one that's clothed in deep plastic bumpers and large hub caps, and lacking plush fittings.

I'll accept that the smoother and more powerful petrol engines are nicer to live with, but there's something forward thinking about the oil burner that gives it the edge. Plus, as with all Mercedes' basic W201 190s, it's still cheap to buy, not to mention slightly more resilient to the effects of rising and falling fuel prices, and modern enough to use every day. I just hope I age as gracefully.



△ Careful placement of controls makes 190 user friendly.

◀△ This decision was a no-brainer for those prioritising economy.

◀ Designer Bruno Sacco helped Merc into a new market.

▽ A total of 452,806 190Ds were made by Mercedes-Benz.

▷▽ Four-plunger injection pump by Bosch for OM601.

factory was automated at great cost to build the new arrival.

Some of the technology feels familiar today. It featured high strength steel to keep the weight down and help economy, and the frontal structure was one of the first to be designed to absorb offset impacts. Features such as airbags, ABS and seat belt pretensioners were new to the segment, and automatic gearboxes had an Economy setting, a little like the drive modes in modern executive saloons.



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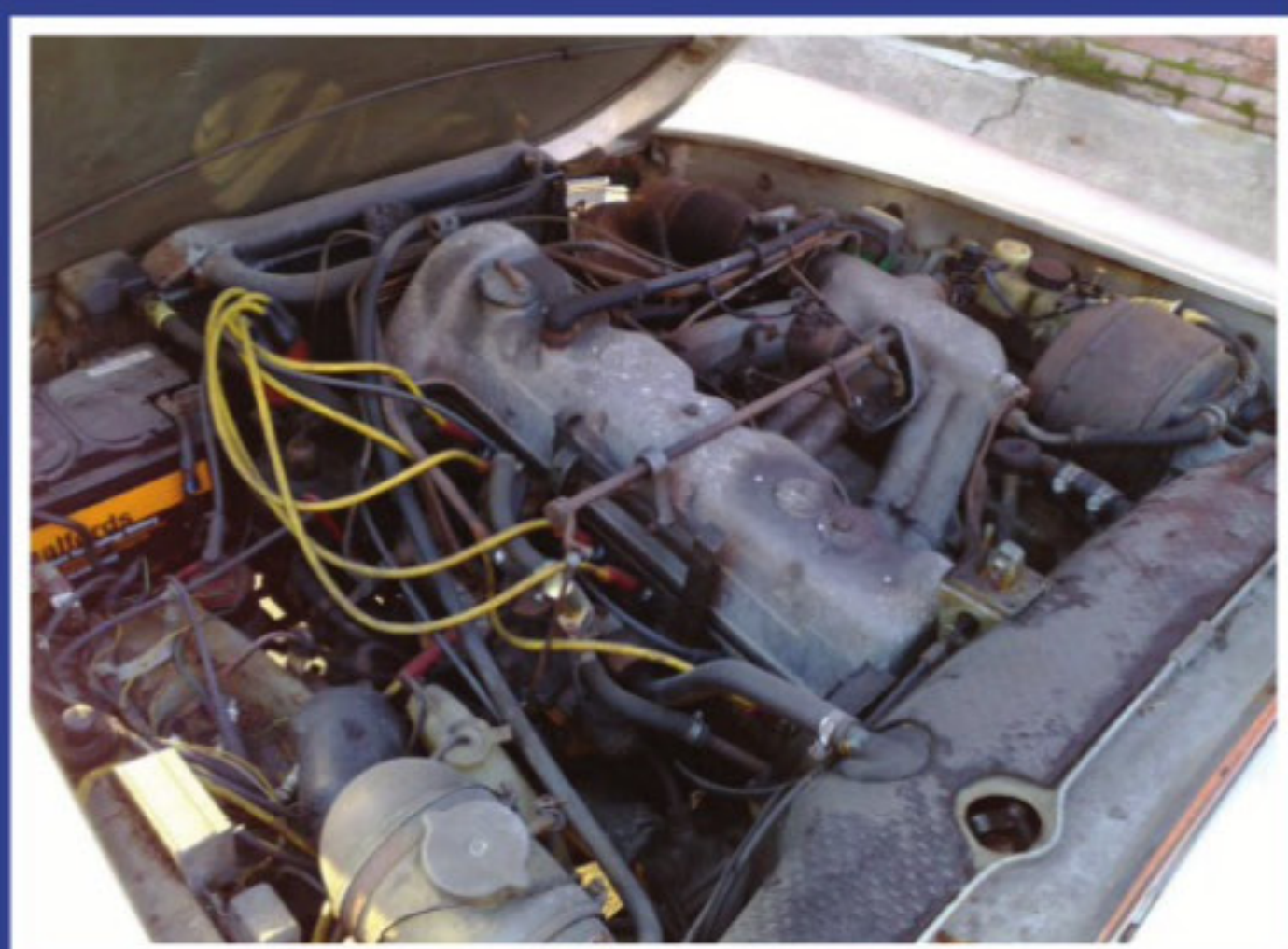
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full service history.



£14,750 1981 Mercedes-Benz 280SL

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great service history.



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WORDS KYLE MOLYNEUX
IMAGES CRAIG PUSEY



THE BRIEF WAS SIMPLE: collect Mercedes-AMG's new GT S from Southern France and drive it back to the UK. Given the calibre of the subject, a 900-mile blat straight north would be an opportunity missed, the many motorways suggested by a well known, online map service promising to reveal little other than the GT's grand touring credentials. Those are certainly important, but there are many more aspects to explore.

No, a more ambitious route was called for, one taking in Monaco, France, Italy, Switzerland, more of France than Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium, before a final fling through Northern France towards the Channel crossing at Calais bound for the UK.

With every road imaginable covered in 1,400 miles of driving, it was the perfect test for AMG's £110,500 rival to the similarly powerful but more expensive Porsche 911 Turbo, probing every nuance of its character to establish if this new sports car is the real deal. So, is it? Read on to find out... ▷

"With every road imaginable covered in 1,400 miles of driving, it was the perfect test for AMG's new sports car"





“Look back at the GT S, seductively lit by spotlights of the refuelling depot, and remember we’ve got our own punches to throw”

△ Our journey begins at dawn in Monte Carlo.



▷ **MONTE CARLO, 5:30AM**

The blue-black sky continues to lighten as a few million pounds worth of watercraft silently bob in Fontvieille Harbor. In the distance looms Mont Agel, its dark presence softened by the many yellow street lamps scattered about the mountainside, decorating green patches like fairy lights on a Christmas tree. Underneath that symbol of the winter season dwells a gift like no other – the Mercedes-AMG GT S.

In the interests of preserving the precious sleep of millionaires, the coupe’s switchable exhaust system is kept quiet for now, although everything is relative – AMG’s new four-litre V8 biturbo still purrs like a content tiger

holding a megaphone as we meander through the labyrinth of tunnels in the area.

Stopping for coffee and to brim the 85-litre fuel tank (including 10 litres in reserve), we are treated to the sight of Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao going toe-to-toe on a TV screen in the service station. On any other day, the most lucrative boxing match in history would be impossible to resist, but then I look back at the GT S, seductively lit by spotlights of the refuelling depot, and remember we’ve got our own punches to throw, so photographer Craig Pusey and I reapply red seats belts and burble out of Monte Carlo, destination: Comps-sur-Artuby.

With caffeine coursing through veins, I’m more awake, more comfortable in the GT’s considerable skin, and more alert to its responses as it carries us west past Nice, the AMG Ride Control suspension in its most comfortable setting and holding off the worst surface intrusions. Along the A8 motorway, the ride is firm and busy but never unsettled, this wide muscle car spreading itself across the lane and feeling utterly planted as I skirt round the carcass of a wild pig slain in the road.

The turquoise water of Lac de Sainte-Croix is our main target, but a scenic route will take us there: road D955 and then the D71 between Comps-sur-Artuby and Aiguines. The former



△ Suspension and exhaust modes explored.

▷ Red details of S spec finish the gorgeous cabin.



JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-AMG GT S (C190)

- ENGINE
M178 3,982cc V8 biturbo
 - POWER
503bhp@6,250rpm
 - TORQUE
479lb ft@1,750-4,750rpm
 - TRANSMISSION
7-speed auto, RWD
 - WEIGHT 1,645kg
 - 0-62MPH 3.8sec
 - TOP SPEED 193mph
 - FUEL CONSUMPTION 30.1mpg
 - CO2 EMISSIONS 219g/km
 - YEARS PRODUCED 2015-on
- Figures for car as pictured; fuel consumption NEDC combined

road begins in Druguignan, the 'capital of Artillery' (how appropriate) and with its smooth surface seems ideal for the suspension's Sport setting, which infuses a greater level of firmness in the damping.

ONE CAR FITS ALL

The road gets really interesting north of Montserrat and I'm starting to lean on the GT S more through bends, but I can sense the car is well and truly within its comfort zone, riding a wave of low hitting torque and flicking from one cambered corner to the next without a single protest from the tyres. The steering is electro-mechanical and speed sensitive with a

variable ratio, which sounds too complicated for its own good, but in reality feels incredibly natural, to me less pin sharp than the SLS's system and all the better for it. Coming to the GT S for the first time, you can simply get in and drive it hard without needing to allow for any artificial and unnatural tendencies.

We are not 50 miles from our starting point and already I can tell AMG has pulled off quite a trick with its new sports car, which feels positively old school despite a wealth of tech wizardry at the driver's disposal. This is very good news indeed.

Picking up the D71, what began as an enjoyable drive turns serious when the road

tightens as it climbs towards the heavens. The GT S's 1.9-metre girth is equal to the SLS's (due to their shared basic chassis) and is the root cause of anxiety as we jink past errant camper vans whose drivers are drawn to this winged creature. With fragile looking fences our only protection from a plummet into the valley far below, our emergence onto wider roads around Lac de Sainte-Croix comes with a huge sense of relief.

With car posing next to gorgeous, blue-green water, this is my first chance to pour over its lines in broad daylight. The £122,745 Edition 1 spec (now sold out in the UK) adds that GT3 style front splitter, aero flicks on the wings, ▷



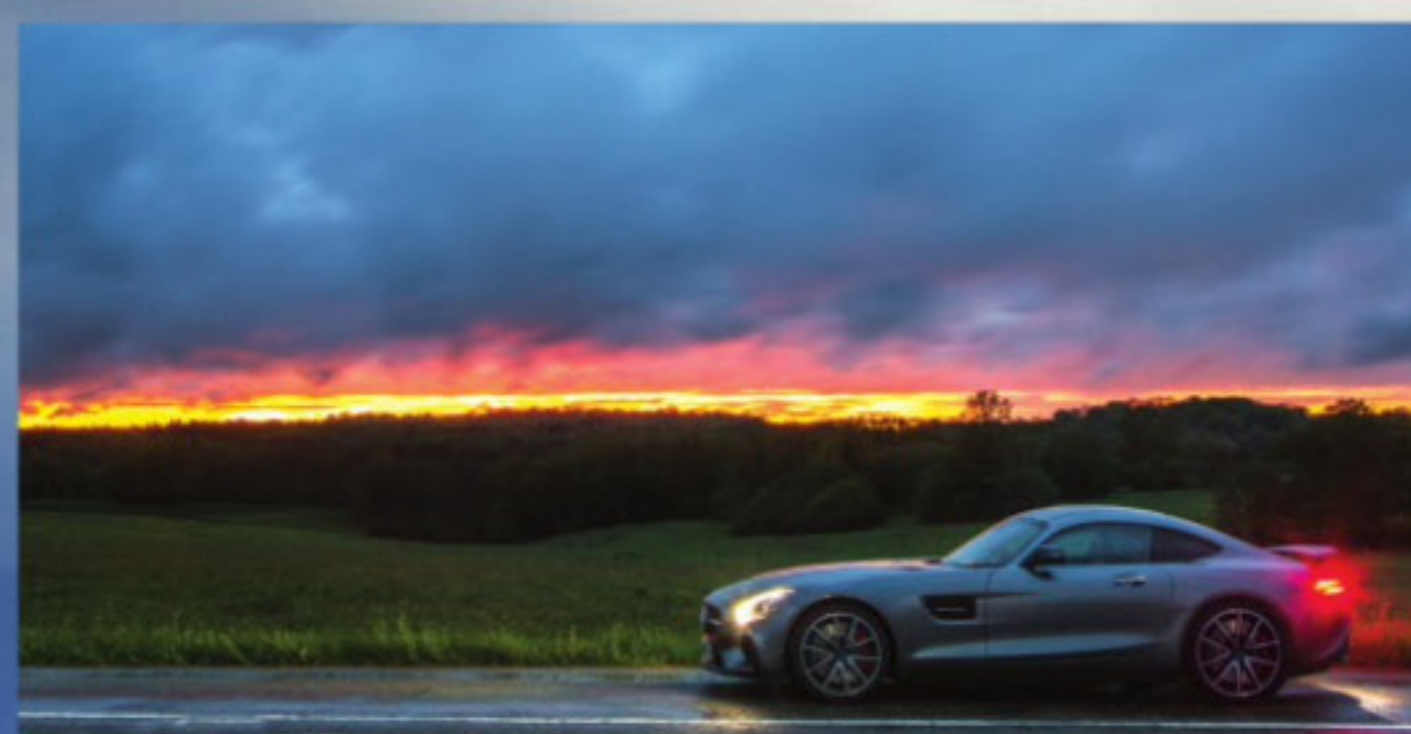
△ The GT S can be a handful in wet conditions.

▷ Turbos only add to the AMG V8 formula.



◁ Alps did not play ball on this epic journey.

▷ Intense rain made better by this sunset.



▷ the fixed rear spoiler and the 19-inch front and 20-inch rear wheels. There's also a carbon fibre roof, which extends the dark appearance started by the curved rear window. While ramping up the aggression, the additional aero trimmings of the Edition 1 distract from what is otherwise a beautifully simple shape.

Looking at the car side on, the way the rear curves from the roof to the diffuser holding the exhaust pipes is shake-your-head-beautiful. With its long bonnet and cabin placed towards the rear of its wheelbase (the weight is distributed 47/53 per cent front to rear), there is more than a hint of SLS in the GT's form, but the new AMG is slightly taller and shorter – and even better looking to these eyes.

ROOM FOR TWO MORE?

Photographs in the bag, the GT S reawakens with a full-bodied *whump*, much to the annoyance of rugged faced fishermen nearby. Back on the open road and with exhaust flaps fully open, two pretty hitchhikers hear the GT S coming before they see it and promptly put on their best smiles in an attempt to negotiate a ride. But with just two figure hugging seats and an already brimmed, 350-litre boot at our disposal, we are forced to mouth our apologies and continue north towards the French/Italian border and the town of Modane, a delicious, baritone back beat chasing us all the way.

The weather has been largely on our side, but we hit rain on the N94 outside Briançon and everything changes. A main route it may be,

but this road has a particularly tricky section with five hairpin bends coated in glistening wet tarmac by the time we arrive.

As a statue of famed English mountaineer Edward Whymper looks on, the GT S tiptoes its way up the mountain, the 295/30 rear tyres absolutely no match for 503bhp and 479lb ft torque delivered from just 1,750rpm (the base GT has 456bhp/442lb ft torque – yours for £97,200). Thankfully, the steering is quick enough to catch the rear with less than an armful of lock, but with the ESP in 'Sport Handling Mode' the GT S feels every inch an animal, wild and eager to bite when drenched.

With an electronically controlled limited-slip differential and the slightest hint of turbo lag, provocation is risky business, but it's immensely satisfying when everything comes together. With less power and reconfigured weight bias, the GT S feels more on your side than the SLS ever did, which ultimately makes the new AMG faster in the real world, despite classed in the segment below.

It's a point I mull over as we arrive in Modane and set the satellite navigation for Bourg-Saint-Maurice, opting for the more interesting route along the D1006 and D902 towards Val-d'Isère. Snow capped mountains await, but 25 miles in our ambitions are cut short – there's an avalanche warning for the area and the road ahead is closed.

Sneaking past the barriers, we venture 100 yards before finding rocks the size of footballs scattered across the road. I quickly select the

exhaust's quieter setting to stop the V8 causing more debris to fall, and urge Craig to move post haste to capture the images we need.

Some 10 minutes later, the sight of a man sized boulder another 100 yards up the mountain pass forces me to call time and we fire back down the road as quickly – and as loudly – as we dare.

With time lost, we maintain our fast pace back to Modane and then north towards Geneva, before re-entering France for our overnight stop in Besançon. Battered by rain for much of the way, the GT S flatters to deceive, its calm demeanour in stark contrast to the character witnessed hours earlier – tyre roar over harsher surfaces the only bugbear in a spacious yet purposefully enclosed cabin.

The day ends with a sunset blazing below clouds of a similar hue to our Selenite Grey metallic AMG, the car's front LEDs and illuminated cabin instruments making it appear like a grounded UFO.

THE SOUND OF GOODBYE

Foot on brake. Press starter button. The GT S doesn't do quiet cold starts, so I don't fire the M178 V8 until absolutely necessary, to avoid disturbing the slumber of guests in our hotel. But a flutter of curtains four floors up suggests I wasn't entirely successful.

After yesterday's 600-mile drive, the sheer focus of the motorsport inspired, double-wishbone suspension has the potential to become tiresome during the next 400 miles ▷

“The GT S reawakens with a full-bodied whump, much to the annoyance of rugged faced fishermen nearby”



“For almost half the price of a new SLS, you can have a car that is faster on a backroad, more comfortable on a motorway, and more efficient overall”

▷ to Belgium. But it never does. On the contrary, it becomes absolutely magical while heading from the town of Todtnau to Freiburg.

A wrong turn sees us heading down the L126 instead of the L124, but two sweeping turns later, the brilliance of the road is obvious and calls for nothing less than full fat Race mode and the seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox set to Manual. During the next few minutes, the GT S snorts louder, corners harder, and goes faster than at any other point on our trip so far.

The suspension is at its stiffest, the exhaust at its most fierce and the throttle at its most responsive, all of which means the GT S devours the next few miles in a fashion I've never experienced in a car supposedly designed for use on public roads. Unmentionable speeds are achieved in the blink of an eye, and then hastily scrubbed from the speedo by those fantastic – and standard – composite brakes.

Each tug of a paddleshifter brings a near instantaneous gear change like nothing any road going AMG has delivered before, downshifts causing an almighty *BANG-crackle* from the exhaust that makes your actions behind the wheel feel beat-your-chest-heroic.

The road ends, but our wrong turn means we must re-climb it, and the GT S elevates itself to a truly special level of greatness, feeling totally plugged into the road's smooth surface and reducing the delay between driver input and car response almost to zero. Despite the road's invitation, the weight of responsibility means I can only flirt with what the GT S is truly capable of delivering, but I've got a very good idea and it is astounding. Brilliantly, intoxicatingly, heroically astounding.



On the second day in Luxembourg heading towards Belgium.

Still on a high, we pick up the autobahn towards Mannheim and legally push the GT S as fast as we dare. Pile-driving up to 150mph in what feels like seconds, the V8 thunders to 173mph before traffic changes shape in front of us and the composite stoppers are called on once more, the tuneful whistle of wind around the A-pillars reminding how much brute force it takes to push a car through air at such high speed. Even just 20mph shy of its maximum velocity, the GT S is confidence inspiring, the Edition 1 add-ons ensuring both nose and backside remain rooted to the ground. Clearly, AMG's new coupe is not a one-trick pony.

THE FINAL APPROACH

Following another fuel stop with a three-figure bill, eastern France and Luxembourg are swiftly dispatched and we arrive in time for dinner at our Belgian hotel. After a year's worth of service station sandwiches, Mars bars and Red Bull consumed in just two days, the first proper meal of this trip tastes like nothing else. Sleep comes easily that night.

The final 300 miles to Calais pass without incident, excepting a torrential downpour that

makes 40mph feel extremely foolhardy, and we even see a healthy 30mpg on the trip computer. The GT S is just narrow enough to fit through the doors of the Eurotunnel train, and we emerge in Kent some 30 minutes later, dirty as hell but finally back on home soil.

Given the journey undertaken and the title of this magazine, it may come as no surprise that I've fallen for the GT S in a big way. But let me explain why: for almost half the price of an SLS AMG when it was new, you can have a car that is faster on a back road, more comfortable on a motorway, and more efficient overall.

The GT S is also prettier, better specced, boasts a far sexier cabin design and is absolutely brimming to the full with character. It's remarkably practical for two, and its four-litre V8 shouts very nearly as loudly as the 6.2-litre monster lurking in the SLS, despite two potentially muffling turbochargers seated in the V of its engine. Rather than being dominated by its V8, the rest of the car raises its game to match it like no other AMG before.

Just one question remains: is the GT S Affalterbach's most complete road car yet? You read it here first.



◁ GT S will hit 193mph, the GT version 189mph.

▷ Home at last – the verdict not in any doubt.



△ Race mode increases sound and response.

◁ Much needed break from all that power!

▷ L126 road near Freiburg was a thrill.



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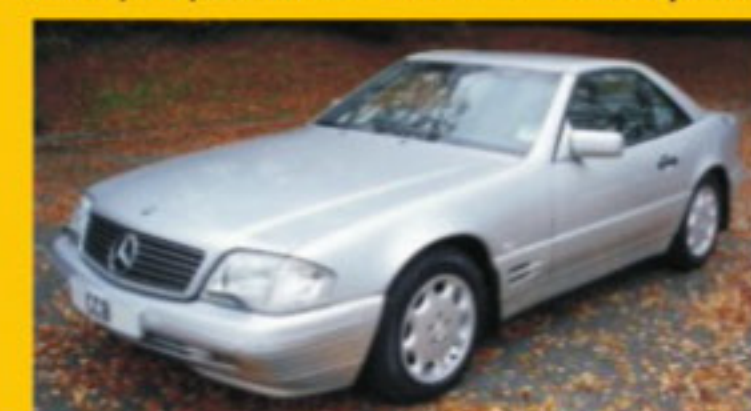
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Nautic Blue metallic, mushroom
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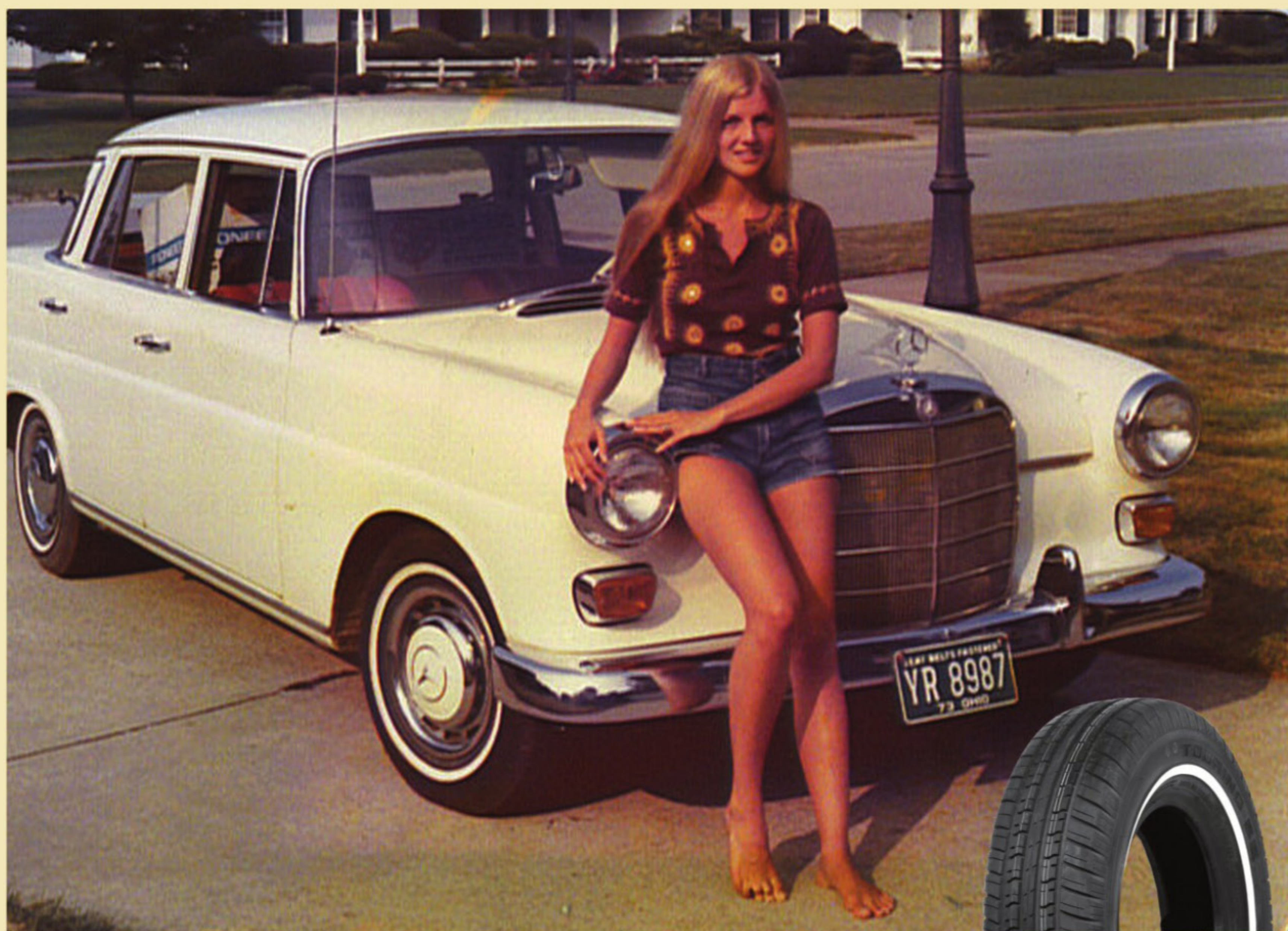
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'XZX'

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'MXV'



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Modern classics

special

Welcome to this special edition of Mercedes Enthusiast, celebrating highlights of an extraordinary period at Mercedes-Benz. Covering the 1970s, 80s and 90s, there is something for everyone in this exciting issue, from a bright orange experimental car that very nearly made production, to a glorious 107-series roadster in beautiful metallic blue.

Full of exclusive content, we've really pushed the boat out for this special magazine, and we can't wait to hear your thoughts on it. So turn over the page and get started!



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Modern classics special

C111 V8

The forbidden *fruit*

Just how good might a C111 road car have been? We drive this Mercedes restored example into the Stuttgart countryside and discover the secrets of the successor to the 300SL Gullwing that never was

WORDS KYLE MOLYNEUX IMAGES CRAIG PUSEY



KEEP CALM. THOSE TWO words my first thought upon seeing the C111 in the flesh, striking in golden orange and with driver's door raised like the arm of an ancient Egyptian.

Previously with only grainy archive images to feed one's imagination, the C111's vibrant presence in the workshop of Mercedes-Benz Classic is completely overwhelming. There are at least eight 300SL Gullwings sharing floor space, not including the competition car from the Carrera Panamericana race in the 1950s, and yet my gaze is locked on the low nosed wind cheater of the 70s, a car deemed unsuitable for full production and yet no less iconic.

The tension in the room builds as Mercedes technicians roam around the car – some with clipboards in hand, others with rags to wipe away the odd fleck of dirt on the fibreglass body of their baby. Finally, everyone seems happy, so the workshop shutters are raised and the C111 is carefully pushed into broad daylight. I'm just beginning to relax when I spot it, sprouting straight upwards and topped with a ball of solid metal – the gearlever of the five-speed, dog leg manual gearbox. *Keep calm.*

With barely enough time to digest this revelation (for some inexplicable reason, I expected this road going C111 to have an auto), I'm invited into the passenger seat and pathetically fumble with the harness, all the while feeling like a jangling bag of ►



▲▲ C111 with a pack of Gullwings in the Classic workshop.

▲ All Mercedes C111s had a ZF five-speed manual transmission.

“I’m just beginning to relax when I spot it – the gearlever of the dog leg manual gearbox”





▲ Fantastic, low set driving position: fast ratio for steering.

► Basic dials include 300km/h speedo and 10,000rpm rev counter.

▲► This C111 even has a Becker GP radio, inserted vertically.





► nerves. The passenger chair is positioned higher than the driver's, so I'm forced into a stooping position to avoid rubbing my head on the roof.

I remain thus folded while project manager Ralph Hettich explains the controls for the battery, ventilation system and headlights. Still coming to terms with my environment, I retain barely a word he says but keep my dignity when handed laminated instructions for operating the car. I nod as if I've done this a thousand times.

There may be a three-pointed star at the tip of the C111's snout, signifying the ultimate in functional engineering, but the sight of a perfectly normal key for starting the engine still comes as a surprise; Ralph looks my way with a knowing 'Are you ready?' before twisting it in the ignition.

What began as a visual onslaught suddenly becomes more visceral, more aural, as the 3.5-litre V8 engages after heavy duty turns of the starter motor. With a perspex screen and firewall the only barriers to the engine behind (the C111 is mid engine), the cabin is brought alive by the lazy bark and subsequent gravelly timbre of a 45-year old, eight-cylinder powerplant. And it's then that I discover English swear words can be appreciated by a person of any nationality.

IN AT THE DEEP END

All too soon we are merging with traffic in Fellbach, but fail spectacularly to become just another part of it. The attention drawn by this queen bee doesn't stop, even when we pull into an industrial estate with the intention of swapping seats. *It's really happening.*

The relief of more headroom is short lived as legroom becomes a critical issue, but then all is well again when I find the handle for moving the seat backwards.

▲ Compact M116 V8 – diff and anti roll bars clearly visible behind.

▲ Taking a leaf out of the W198 300SL Gullwing's book.

▼ The C111 uses a bespoke chassis and fibreglass bodywork.

It turns out that Mercedes' test drivers weren't all of equal size...

The four-spoke steering wheel is vaguely familiar, but the instrument cluster certainly isn't – appearing brutally minimalist with none of the yellow highlights that you'd find in an R107 SL, for example. Far left is a 300km/h speedometer and next to that is a rev counter that reads to 10,000, but which redlines at 6,500rpm.

Cast your gaze further right and you'll find gauges for the fuel tank and oil pressure above gauges for water and oil temperatures. Further down the centre console, there is an analogue clock, Becker Grand Prix radio (that you'll never use, such is the V8's sweet sound) and controls for the heating.

Of chief concern now is operating the five-speed manual gearbox, built by ZF specially for the C111. Moving the thick necked gearlever left and then down in its gate with a lovely short action, first gear is engaged with little effort, and the gentle clutch bite point is mercifully discovered around one third of the way up the pedal's travel.

Before I know it, we are rolling back towards Mercedes-Benz Classic, the V8's guttural undertones masking what is otherwise a remarkably civilised prototype. With ever slicker changes up to fourth gear, and then a careful blip of the throttle to reintroduce third and skim off speed for traffic, Ralph has seen enough and, after arriving back at base, he hops out over the 10-inch sill before shutting the gullwing door and leaving me alone with the engine's deep and rhythmic breathing.

GOING SOLO

The plan is to escape the confines of urban life and head east in search of more interesting country roads – the sort an owner would have relished had the Mercedes-Benz board given the C111, with a design overseen by Bruno Sacco, the green light for production.

So why didn't it? Debuting at the Frankfurt motor show in September 1969, the C111 experimental car was conceived during an otherwise ultra conservative era at Stuttgart. Passenger

safety was becoming more important and the fibreglass body had a few drawbacks in that regard. What's more, the original engine, a 276bhp three-rotor Wankel, was deemed thirsty, overly polluting and unreliable without a stringent servicing schedule.

The 345bhp, four-rotor Wankel version built in 1970 was little better and so, despite several customers writing blank cheques for a road going version of the C111, Mercedes-Benz opted against series production. Given the 'oil crisis' of 1973, which had the potential to cripple any sports car project, no matter how brilliant it was, that was probably the correct move.

Mercedes-Benz made 14 C111s, many of which became record breakers on track (see separate box on page 41). Three were subsequently scrapped, but that still leaves us with 11 survivors today, plus the two original 'rat trap' cars – in other words, mock ups.

Looking to revive the spirit of the C111 experimental and research cars, Mercedes-Benz Classic granted this example another 3.5-litre M116 V8 in 2014 (it used one when 'new'), and if that compact powerplant sounds familiar to you, that's because it was used in the W111 280SE 3.5 Coupe and Cabriolet, as well as the W109 300SEL 3.5 and the R107 350SL.


With 197bhp, this C111 is a good 300bhp down on the 4.8-litre V8 monster that stormed to 403.978km/h

“The C111 feels an absolute brute in the hills around Stuttgart”


(251.031mph) at Nardó in 1979. Is that deficit something you worry about when driving it? Not for a second.

Weighing in at 1,363kg, this C111 is almost 200kg lighter than a 350SL which, with a four-speed manual gearbox, could cruise up to 62mph from a standing start in 8.8 seconds. ►






As confidence builds, so does the speed – the C111 is a proper driver's car!



There are more than a few hints of the C111's potential as a road going Mercedes.



◀ Magnesium, 15-inch wheels save precious weight.

▼ The pop up lights not needed during our drive.



► Packing five, more tightly spaced forward ratios, this bright orange coupe could be breaking into the 7s for the benchmark sprint.

In the interests of preservation, I'm told not to take the car beyond 120km/h (75mph), but that's fine with me, as the C111 feels an absolute brute in the hills around Stuttgart, tipping forward slightly on the brakes before *whumping* on downshifts, then squatting on its hind legs when the power is redeployed, the crisp

revolutions of the V8's internals teasing occupants with what might have been.

Of course, compared to what Mercedes-Benz was producing at the time, the C111's body control is exemplary, and its centre of gravity tangibly low. This rolling monument of achievement may be set up to understeer, numbing the bespoke chassis' pivot point and protecting the car from ham fisted journalists, but the multi link suspension feels compliant, resolute in its control and thus

thoroughly dependable. The 215/70VR15 Michelin XWX tyres contribute to bicep bursting steering at low and medium speeds, but wrapped around magnesium five spokes they really look the part; modern spec rubber on this 45-year old machine just wouldn't do.

MULTI DIMENSIONAL

As the miles roll by, my nerves are but a memory and the C111 settles into a natural flow that drivers of much larger GTs would be familiar with. It's an

Evolution of the C111

C111 experimental car (1st version)

Built 1969

Engine Three-rotor Wankel, 3x600cc, 276bhp/217lb ft

0-62mph 5.0sec

Top speed 162mph

Weight 1,100kg



C111 experimental car (2nd version)

Built 1970

Engine Four-rotor Wankel, 4x600cc, 345bhp/289lb ft

0-62mph 4.8sec

Top speed 186mph

Weight 1,240kg



C111-IID record car

Built 1976

Engine 5-cyl turbodiesel, 2,999cc, 187bhp/268lb ft

0-62mph Na

Top speed 162mph

Weight 1,300kg

World records 3



C111-III record car

Built 1977/1978

Engine 5-cyl turbodiesel, 2,999cc, 227bhp/297lb ft

0-62mph Na

Top speed 202mph

Weight 1,400kg

World records 9



C111-IV record car

Built 1979

Engine V8 biturbo, 4,820cc, 493bhp/442lb ft

0-62mph Na

Top speed 251mph

Weight 1,400kg

World records 1



“The multi link suspension feels compliant, resolute in its control and thus thoroughly dependable”

impressive feat given the short-wheelbase, mid engined cocktail I'm drinking in, and shows – yet again – just how good a road going C111 would have been. Deftly managing the road's undulating surface, there is an alertness to the recirculating ball steering that a 107-series SL could only dream of replicating, the C111's long nose suddenly feeling a great deal shorter and less intimidating as it slices into another turn, mottled sunlight filtered by trees bringing that orange exterior hue alive.

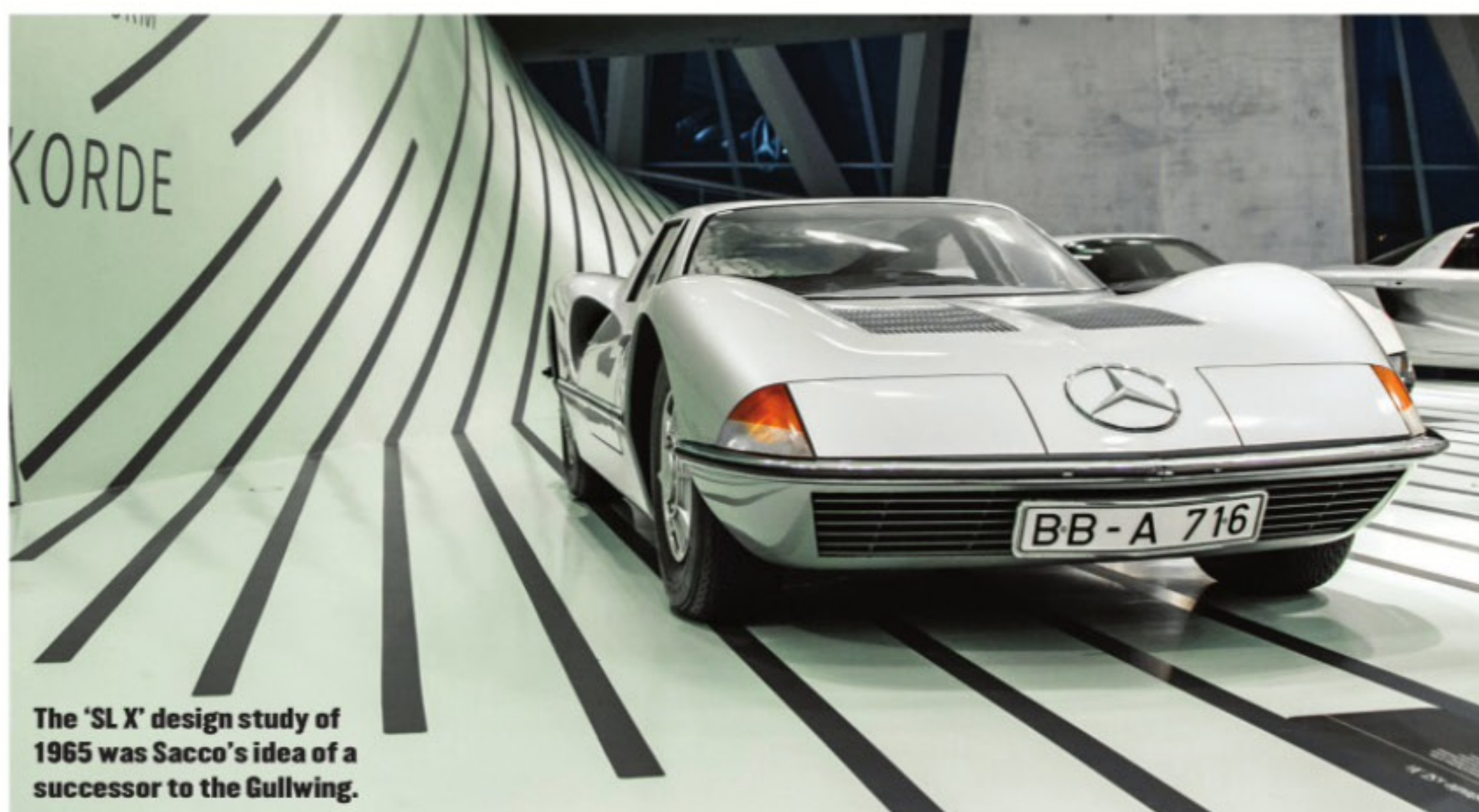
Had Mercedes-Benz taken the plunge, the C111 would have had an almighty fight on its hands (or perhaps not, given the raw sex appeal of those gullwing doors!). Lurking in the market around the same time was the Ferrari 365 GT4 BB, the Maserati Bora, Lamborghini's Miura and Countach, the Lotus Esprit and later the BMW M1, all iconic cars in their own right.

But after six hours at the wheel, the C111 has made its mark. The doors might not close so easily when the

fibreglass gets hot, the instrument cluster is a work in progress, and the passenger side remains the cause of visits to a chiropractor, but this is only an 'experimental car', resurrected to remind us of Mercedes' ambitions over four decades ago. How close we came to calling the SLS AMG a successor to the C111 – but there is much more to the story, so turn over and read on...

➤ See the video on our 'Mercedes Enthusiast' YouTube Channel

Bruno Sacco



The 'SL X' design study of 1965 was Sacco's idea of a successor to the Gullwing.

Bruno Sacco

An icon of style, achievement & true modesty

Across four decades, Italian designer Bruno Sacco shaped many of Mercedes' most distinctive and successful cars. There was also 'project X', a sports star that evolved the 300SL Gullwing formula – he reveals his thoughts to Mercedes Enthusiast


WORDS SUSANNE ROEDER IMAGES DAIMLER AG

THE PROSPECT OF MEETING the grand *seigneur* of Mercedes-Benz design was very exciting, even if we had been warned that car design was the one subject he wanted to avoid. However, meeting the living legend who gave Mercedes-Benz cars a fresh but timeless appearance was more than enticing enough for us.

Always the perfect gentleman, he arranged our first encounter to take place over an extensive Italian meal, and without being pushed too hard, did eventually talk about some epoch making developments – always emphasising with his typical modesty that he had simply been the head of a marvellous design team.

Bruno Sacco arrived in Stuttgart in January 1958 to take up work as a 'stylist'. In fact, stylists in those days were considered no more than a useful addition to the all important team of mechanical engineers. When the young Italian started, only he and the Frenchman Paul Bracq were working as proper designers for Friedrich Geiger. Soon after Geiger resigned in 1974, Sacco took over as 'Chief Designer' in the Style Center, and the whole aspect of design in the company started to assume greater importance.

"I always wanted to join Mercedes-Benz, and looking back I realise that Mercedes-Benz really determined my life – Sindelfingen and the Design Center, that is." The gentleman from Udine started and finished his professional career with the premium car manufacturer. His strong-willed and disciplined but always team oriented nature fitted perfectly ►



**“Looking
back, I
realise that
Mercedes-
Benz really
determined
my life”**



Bruno Sacco



◀ For Sacco, it didn't get any better than Geiger's Gullwing.

▼ Sacco (third right) with safety guru Béla Barényi on his left.



► with the Mercedes-Benz ethos, and he stayed there 41 years.

Despite his talent and stature, he remained what he has always been – a modest and practical team player who never thrust himself to the fore. It is in this spirit that he describes himself dismissively to us as *un troglodita*, in other words a simple character. He recalls that his father was constantly away from home in his youth, so it was up to his mother to care for her son's education as best she could.

THE HUB OF CAR DESIGN

At an early age, the seeds of his interest in vehicles had been sown by a passion for trains. The ultimate inspiration that sparked off the young man's move to Turin, however, was yet to come.

With the school certificate from the Technical Institute, Antonio Zano in Udine, in his hands, Bruno Sacco travelled to the Turin motor show that same year. This is when his eyes fell on the beautiful Studebaker Starlight Coupe. "A little later, I saw the vehicle again, and that ultimately confirmed my passion for cars," he recalls.

In those days, apart from being the hotspot of the Italian car making industry, Turin ranked among the biggest international centres of car design. The city was home to Pininfarina, Carrozzeria Ghia, Nuccio Bertone, Gigi Michelotti, Giorgetto Giugiaro, Fiat and Lancia Design. Consequently, young Bruno, not yet of



age according to the law at that time, wanted to be close to the action and this resulted in the family moving to Turin in 1952 and Bruno enrolling at the Technical University of Engineering.

He didn't, in fact, enjoy his course studies but rather it was his growing fascination with cars and design that consumed him. Ultimately, this dedication got him his first job as an

▲ Sacco's C126 SEC had it all – style, quality and presence.

▲ The W126 signalled a coming revolution at Mercedes-Benz.

apprentice with Carrozzeria Ghia. In these years he met Sergio Pininfarina who further spurred on his blossoming talent as a 'car stylist'.

In spite of being an Italian in the heart of Italian car design, Bruno Sacco felt irresistibly drawn to Mercedes-Benz and followed its sports car success in motor racing. "I felt the 300SL was a fantastic sports car. It stood out a mile next to the drab array of production saloons." Though excited by the German marque, he could not escape the feeling that, overall, the styling of Mercedes-Benz cars badly needed some fresh thinking.

Theoretical reflections were soon put to the test, because Bruno Sacco managed to get a job interview with Karl Wilfert, then chief of car body development at Mercedes-Benz, resulting in his prompt employment in Sindelfingen – which of course turned out to become the job of a lifetime.

"Pure styling" was on young Bruno's mind but it was not, as it turned out, the mindset of the German car maker. Nevertheless, being the strong-willed and hardworking man that he was, he persistently pushed his ideas of what a Mercedes-Benz could and should look like. That required him to combine common sense with an elegance devoid of frills or fashionable innuendos.

It took about a decade before he was in a position to shape the design of Europe's then most profitable automobile company. This was partly because he had left Geiger for five years to work with Béla Barényi on passive safety. It gave him a deep understanding of engineering, which was evident in all future Sacco designs.

Being both stylist and technical designer made him responsible for the essential elements of a Mercedes-Benz, namely exclusiveness, quality, long lifespan, perfection and not least of all, refinement. These were later to be reflected, memorably, in the C126 SEC of 1981. To Sacco, style and technology were equally important and it was up to the designer to reconcile innovative content and technological highlights.

PURE STYLING

As banal as it may sound, the essential mantra guiding his hand on the drawing board was, "A Mercedes must always look unmistakably like a Mercedes." More explicitly, to him that meant incorporating innovation in tradition.

This was perfectly manifested in the 126-series saloon of 1979 and even more so in the W201 190, the saloon which from 1982 made Mercedes-Benz cars

accessible to a wider clientele – a decidedly revolutionary step in the history of the marque. “The 190 was the car that convinced people that Mercedes was capable of change. Before that car came out, public opinion would be that all Mercedes models are all the same, and that used to drive me mad. But from then on it was no longer an issue.”

Deep down, Sacco had always wanted to design a successor to his favourite model, the 300SL Gullwing. So it was with delight and determination that he jumped at the offer from Karl Wilfert to do exactly that – the so-called ‘project X’. At this time, Sacco was still working under Barényi who, along with Geiger, reported directly to Wilfert.

So the trio Paul Bracq, Giorgio Battistella and Bruno Sacco set to work. Sacco was mainly in charge of the engineering, with Bracq and his colleague Battistella developing the styling of the new creation.

Yet, as is well known, there was no follow up to the 300SL Gullwing until, in 2009, the SLS AMG with its gullwing doors could lay claim to being the spiritual successor.

However, it has to be emphasised that project X had nothing to do with the C111 project. The latter dealt with prototypes as part of the development of the Wankel engine, whereas project X was to be, in Sacco’s mind, the successor to the famous 300SL Gullwing, the car that had transfixed him.

The confidence in the model was such that, for years it was exhibited in the entrance hall to the factory in Untertürkheim, before being moved to Sindelfingen, where customers picking up their new Mercedes-Benz cars could cast admiring eyes upon it.

From there, it has recently been moved again to make it visible to a larger public as part of the C111 exhibition at the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart until November. As the ever self-effacing Sacco remarks about the X model with a laugh. “I had friends telling me that they saw one of my cars in Sindelfingen. This caught me by surprise, because it was not so much *my* car as the car of all of us. In fact, I would still say that the main thrust of ideas featuring in the model were Giorgio Battistella’s.”

Most would see this as just another example of his modesty. Being the one at the head of the project and supervising it throughout, his name certainly does deserve to be on the plate.

So what exactly happened to the Sacco project back in the 1960s? “It did reach the status of a beautiful 1:1



“Deep down, Sacco had always wanted to design a successor to his favourite model, the 300SL Gullwing”

model,” he remarks dryly. This model (which he never fails to call a joint effort) by Paul Bracq and Giorgio Battistella was intended as a blueprint for the next Gullwing. However, when the wing doored mock up was revealed to the mighty Board of Directors and a

group of Untertürkheim engineers, it was severely criticised – not least, one suspects, because all along there was another project in the pipeline.

THE FATE OF PROJECT X

This was of course the Wankel engined C111, the development of which was already well under way, and ultimately led to project X being discontinued.

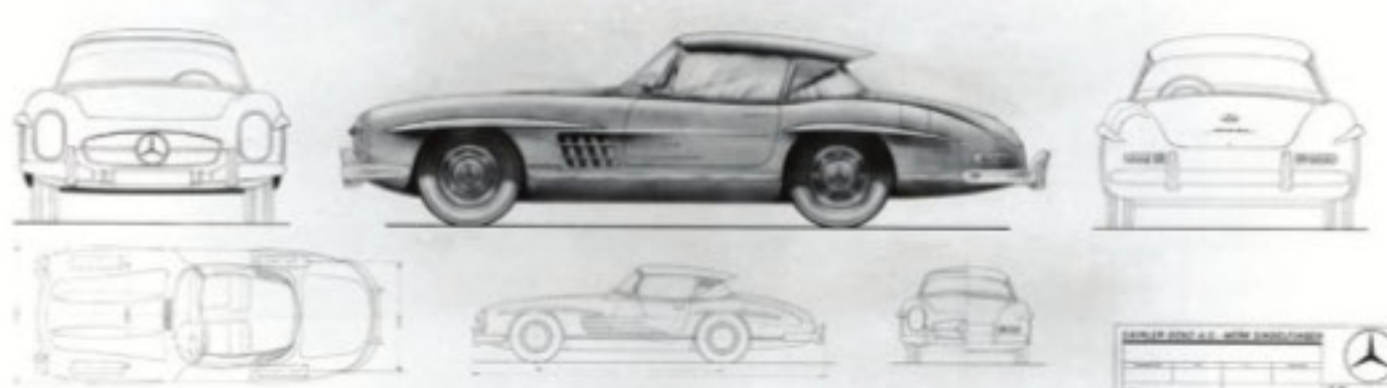
More or less simultaneously with project X, a team of engineers in Untertürkheim had been working with a local ‘stylist’ in Untertürkheim and had presented Wilfert with a 1:5 model of what would become the C111. Wilfert considered it a good start, but decided that the styling department in Sindelfingen should take over.

In the meantime, the development of the C111 had gathered so much momentum that the styling of this sports car posed a new and interesting challenge for Friedrich Geiger’s team.

Chief stylist Geiger was delighted to take on the styling of what was an experimental sports car programme for the development of the Wankel

► Friedrich Geiger penned the 300SL and 540K among others.

▼ Early sketches of the car that would inspire Bruno Sacco.





Bruno Sacco



► engine. For it, Mercedes' engineers in Untertürkheim had developed a three-rotor Wankel engine with 276bhp.

So what was Sacco's role in it? No sooner had he returned to the styling team in 1968 when Geiger handed the technical leadership of the project over to him to supervise its further development, which resulted in the driving prototypes C111-I and -II.

Once the C111-I had been presented, the shaping of the next prototype had to be tackled, for which the engineers this time had developed a four-rotor engine producing a maximum of 345bhp and a top speed of 186mph. Both engines achieved impressive speed records in the USA. Sadly though, none of the Wankel prototypes were put in series, their relatively high fuel consumption falling foul of the 1973 oil crisis.

Sacco insists, "The C111-I and II were very much the work of the design team which I headed, and I contributed some ideas, but most of all my job as project manager was to see the project through and make sure it would be a success. Geiger as head stylist simply was the C111 man."

THE C111-III

There was, however, a further sequence to the C 111 project – one that bore Sacco's signature throughout and for which he does claim full responsibility.

A few years had elapsed and the development of the Wankel engine was no longer pursued. However, for the purpose of a new aerodynamic demonstration by the engineers in Untertürkheim, project C111-III was



▲ Admitted to the Automotive Hall of Fame in Michigan, USA.

▲▲ Sacco put his stamp on the C111-III record car of 1977.

perfectly suited. Adaptations were made with the latest five-cylinder turbodiesel engines that resulted in a new record series of speed in Nardò. Sacco had just been established as Chief Designer and as Geiger's successor when he launched the project. "Nobody – nobody at all wanted a C111-III," he states vehemently. But launching this new project was the best way to showcase the potential of his design team.

"I pursued a certain idea with this project. Above all, having just become responsible for the team, I wanted to make the freshness of my design team tangible. And for this I wanted to give them as much scope as possible to develop their ideas.

"This, to me, was the natural thing to do because I have never felt the need, let alone urge, to design a car entirely on my own. To me, design has always been a question of teamwork."

Though the diesel record car never made it into production, several of its aerodynamic features some five years later figured in the W126 saloon (the first one for which Sacco was fully responsible), and most notably in the rear design of Mercedes' new 'Baby Benz', the W201 190.

FROM TRACK TO ROAD

Sacco himself calls the R129 SL "the most perfect car" of his career. A car that to him portrays the ideal mixture of emotion, elegance and style. He calls it "a stroke of luck" and again thanks his young team for being so focused on high performance.

Being the considerate and thoughtful gentleman he was, it comes hardly as a surprise to find he was held in high esteem by his team. Harald Leschke, once a member of Sacco's team and also his assistant for several years, calls his former superior "the best boss one could possibly dream of".

He goes on to sum up Sacco's leadership. "He showed great tolerance, was sympathetic, modest and always prepared to listen. Plus he had that all important ability to delegate, and once he had delegated a task he consulted with those working on it without standing over them. In short, he was an authority, but he was not authoritarian."

It comes as little surprise that Bruno Sacco has received awards galore from all over the world. Two of these he cherishes in particular, most notably having become inductee of the Automotive Hall of Fame in 2006.

Prolific journalist Keith Crain held the speech before handing over the cup which reads, 'The Highest Place of Honor in the International Motor Vehicle Industry – Bruno Sacco, 2006, Inductee'. The 'Lifetime Design Achievement Award' means a lot to Sacco because it was bestowed upon him by fellow designers.

With or without all these trophies, which are hidden away in a cupboard, one cannot fail to notice that the world's roads today are still full of his creations. Their enduring appeal confirms the timelessness of Bruno Sacco's automotive designs.



“Sacco himself calls the R129 SL ‘the most perfect car’ of his long career”

KIM CAIRNS

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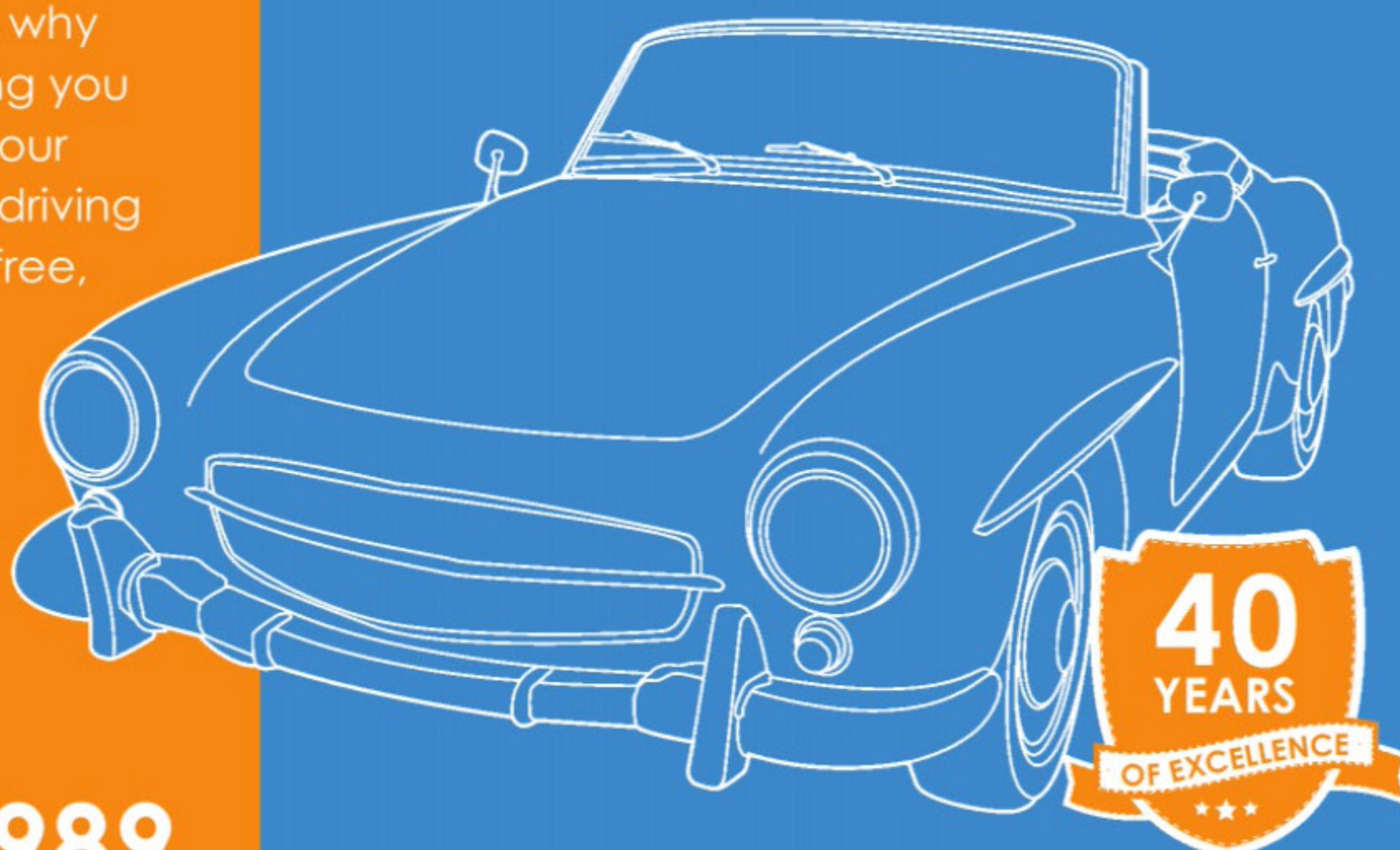
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Modern classics special
E500 vs E63 AMG

Pure *Ecstasy*

Shining lights at the top of the E-Class tree, can the illustrious W124 E500 hold a candle to the brute force of the latest E63 AMG S?

WORDS KYLE MOLYNEUX/IAN KUAH IMAGES CRAIG PUSEY



SEPARATED BY MORE THAN 260bhp and over two decades of development, you would think this head-to-head would be a one-sided contest, with the E63 AMG S Estate mercilessly beating the W124 E500 to within an inch of its life.

However, comparing two generations of Mercedes is never straightforward, and performance only makes up part of the story, even when the cars in question are crafted to deliver that in spades.

With Ian Kuah firmly in the E500's camp, Kyle Molyneux flying the flag for the E63, and Craig Pusey focused behind the camera, it's time for us all to convince you, one way or the other...

STYLING AND ENGINEERING

E500

The W124 is a classic Bruno Sacco design that looks perfectly proportioned and detailed from every angle. Whether you prefer the original incarnation, or the first or second facelift

versions is down to personal taste. The 500E/E500 appeared in 1991, and thus only existed in the two facelifted versions, its extended wheelarches and wider 16-inch alloy wheels giving it a more purposeful stance.

I was on the original 500E launch in 1991, and was amazed by the car's power, ride and handling. However, it was the day I spent with an E500 Limited in Stuttgart in 1994 that finally sealed the deal for me. The elegant Sapphire Black metallic paint, 17x8.25J, diamond cut finish Evolution II wheels, and the bespoke leather interior with black bird's eye maple wood inserts made me take out my cheque book.

A joint venture with Porsche, which engineered and built the car for Mercedes-Benz, the 500E was a far cry from the AMG Hammer, which was essentially a hand built, late 1980s tuner car with all the connotations that implies. In contrast, the 500E was thoroughly engineered from stem to stern. With a total of 1,100 new or modified parts compared to the base 300E, including bespoke inner wings to accommodate the wider V8 motor, it also featured Mercedes' then new ASR (automatic slip control) system.

The 500E used the R129 SL's rear suspension and its four-pot caliper front brakes. The facelifted E500 had the even larger brakes from the SL600, but in truth even these were not a strong point of the car when driven in anger. The best ►

“Performance only makes up part of the story, even when the cars in question are crafted to deliver that in spades”

► aftermarket brakes were the Brabus/Alcon upgrade, as used on the tuner's 444bhp 6.5-litre conversion.

E63 AMG

Granted, any Sacco designed car is hard to compete against in the looks department, but what the 212-series E63 AMG lacks in finesse, it more than makes up with sheer visual impact, and thus better distinguishes itself from regular E-Classes than the W124 E500.

The sleek LED headlights, single-louvre grille and 'A-wing' front apron look super aggressive, and are complemented by V8 biturbo badges on the flanks, 18-inch AMG alloys with red brake calipers lurking behind, plus a quad-pipe exhaust system out back.

While the E500 makes do with a paltry one suspension setting and two gearbox modes, the E63 boasts three modes for its AMG tuned, multi link suspension, and four modes for its seven-speed, multi clutch AMG gearbox, including a Manual option for making use of the paddleshifters attached to its sporty sized helm, and

granting a level of driver involvement arguably missing in its predecessor.

The E500's cabin may be leather clad and spacious, but its steering wheel is more taxi than performance car, and although the E500's interior appears made from solid stone, the E63 totally overshadows it in terms of fit, finish and technology. The AMG sports seats offer more range of adjustment and many sitters would reckon them to be more comfortable and supportive than the E500's, too.

AMG branding is everywhere on the E63 – in the engine bay, on the headrests, on the dials – so there is no doubting what you are driving, even

“While the E500's motor was derived from something a little less spectacular, the E63's V8 twin-turbo is all AMG”



E500 vs E63 AMG

when the V8 biturbo motor is fast asleep. Less can be said for the E500 which, unusual seat pattern aside (part of the 'Limited' spec built late in production), offers a very formal and straight cut environment with little hint of the performance on tap.

POWER AND HANDLING E500

Employing Bosch LH-Jetronic injection, the 4,973cc, four-cam M119 V8 produced 322bhp with 354ft lb of torque in the original 500E, but from October 1992 tightening emissions controls resulted in a loss of 6bhp and 7lb ft, although the difference (due to removal of the full throttle enrichment control) is not really noticeable on the road.

The fact that the M119 had four valves per cylinder and variable valve timing on the intake camshaft was

significant, and while in theory the later 302bhp, three valves per cylinder M113 V8 had a better overall torque curve, the M119's VVT system delivers lustier low down response.

The torque of the big V8 belied its stopwatch numbers. While the E500's 0-62mph time of 6.1 seconds was a tad slower than that of the 3.8-litre, six-cylinder BMW M5, superior torque combined with the kickdown of the four-speed auto enabled the E500 to haul away from the M5 in middling gear acceleration. It would do the same to the non turbo Porsche 911s of its era, and is the archetypal Q-car par excellence.

The difference in ride quality between the standard 16-inch wheels and the 17-inch Evo II alloys on this E500 Limited is quite apparent. The latter, shod with Michelin rubber, has an edge to its ride, but the extra grip is most welcome. The wider tracks, R129 suspension and ASR make a huge difference to the car's handling and grip compared to a 300E or E320.

JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz E500 (W124)

ENGINE **M119 4,973cc V8**

POWER **316bhp@5,600rpm**

TORQUE **347lb ft@3,900rpm**

TRANSMISSION **4-SPEED AUTO, RWD**

WEIGHT **1,730kg**

0-62MPH **6.1sec**

TOP SPEED **155MPH**

FUEL CONSUMPTION **16.7mpg**

CO2 EMISSIONS **NA**

YEARS PRODUCED **1991-1995**

Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S Estate (\$212)

ENGINE **M157 5,461cc V8 BITURBO**

POWER **577bhp@5,500rpm**

TORQUE **590lb ft@2,000-4,500rpm**

TRANSMISSION **7-SPEED AUTO, RWD**

WEIGHT **1,955kg**

0-62MPH **4.1sec**

TOP SPEED **155MPH**

FUEL CONSUMPTION **28.5mpg**

CO2 EMISSIONS **232g/km**

YEARS PRODUCED **2013-on**

Figures for a March 1994-on E500 as pictured, and a standard E63 AMG S Estate; fuel consumption for the E500 according to EEC urban, and NEDC combined for the E63; top speeds electronically limited

There is no doubt that the 500E/E500 would have benefited from a limited-slip differential, but it is otherwise the most capable super saloon of its era.

E63 AMG

Planted. That is the word which sums up how the E63 feels on the road, at least with the ESP fully engaged. The ►



◀ E500 is 56mm wider than a regular 124-series saloon.

◀◀ The 500E had 322bhp and 354lb ft torque until late 1992.

◀◀◀ The 155mph top speed was just the start for this W124 V8.

► E63's 360mm front and rear brake discs work well on road.

►► Ride, handling, ESP and gearbox all adjustable on E63.

►►▲ It takes mere seconds to reach the national speed limit.

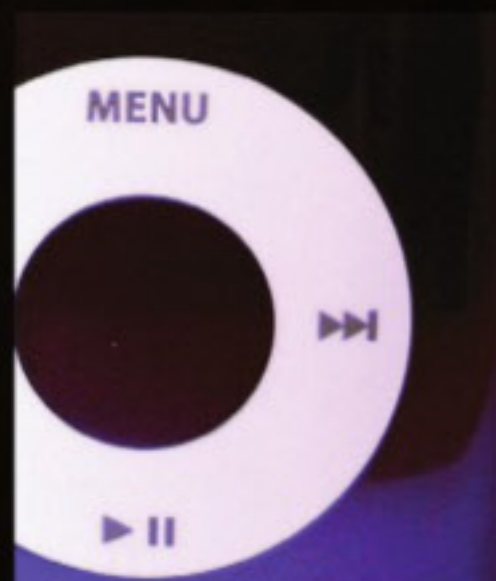


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E500 vs E63 AMG



► front suspension is 48mm wider than a normal E-Class's, and boasts independent wheel carriers, steering knuckles, wishbones, tension strut bearings and head bearings, plus more negative camber. At the rear you'll find new tie rods, tension struts and a more rigid subframe carrier for the rear axle.

All of which means increased stability and agility, making the E63 not just immensely practical, but also an absolute hoot on the road, cradling you in the palm of a velvet glove while punching you through the air with a deep and forceful bellow.

Being the more powerful and expensive S model, this 577bhp/590lb ft torque wagon comes with a limited-slip differential as standard. And that's a good job given how easily rear grip can



▲ Four gears for the E500 and seven for its modern equivalent.

▲▲ Restrained cabin design could count against the E500.

▲▲▲ Superb seats are just the start of the E63's cabin triumphs.

be overcome with the ESP system set to 'Sport handling mode', or disengaged completely – another example of adjustability that you won't find in the 124-series V8.

While the E500's motor was derived from something a little less spectacular, the E63's 5.5-litre M157 V8 twin-turbo is all AMG. EU6 compliant and with 1bar of boost in S form, the M157 weighs just 204kg dry and features direct petrol injection, an aluminium crankcase, four-valve tech with camshaft adjustment, and even an Eco Start/Stop function to save fuel when at a standstill. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, E500!

BUYING AND MAINTENANCE E500

Like all classic cars, the value of any 500E/E500 is more dependent on condition and service history than mileage. Generally, owners love their cars so much that they have restored them, or better still, never allowed them to fall into disrepair in the first place.

Values of early 500Es are from £10,000 for a high mileage example, and remain at around £25,000 for a pristine E500 Limited. The very rare, six-litre E60 AMG version is worth more, especially as a Limited, but its true value is a matter for the buyer and seller to agree upon!

As the 500E/E500 is really a Mercedes parts bin car, spares are available from official dealers and the usual trusted aftermarket suppliers. If you have an early car that requires an ECU, make sure that you get the same model year replacement as a later unit will lose you that 6bhp!

Shoehorning a big V8 into an engine bay never designed for it means that workspace around the motor is at a premium. Changing a headlamp bulb for instance – an easy task on a normal W124 – suddenly becomes a challenge even for a contortionist.

These cars suffer the same bio-degradable wiring harness failures as other Mercedes of this era, so if you are in the market for a 500E/E500, it is useful to know that the upgrade has already been done.

The 1.7-tonne kerb weight of the 500E/E500 puts a lot of stress on the brakes, and front disc and pad wear is high if you drive hard. Luckily, these parts are relatively inexpensive to replace, and generally last 60,000 miles.

“EU6 compliant and with 1bar of boost in S form, AMG's M157 V8 weighs just 204kg dry”

Some 1992 cars were fitted with Brembo aluminium calipers that caused a resonance when the pad level reached a certain point. Later 1992 and 1993 cars used heavier ATE iron calipers, which eliminated this problem. The facelifted 1993-on cars used the problem free SL600 brakes.





E500 vs E63 AMG



“They are both classics, but one of these E-Classes is even more deserving of that title than the other”

► E63 AMG

Starting at £74,725 in saloon form and just shy of £76,515 as an estate, for the price of an E63 AMG you could buy a handful of W124 V8s – and perhaps one more with the 10 grand needed for the more powerful E63 AMG S derivative.

Are they worth that much more than their spiritual predecessor? There are many people who would argue otherwise, but solace can be found with Mercedes' Approved Used search tool, with 2013-on facelifted E63 saloons starting from £48,000 and estates from £53,000, representing a substantial drop in value, despite only around 10,000 miles showing on the clock.

Indeed, wait until these cars are three years old and their market values are expected to be sub £35,000 – or roughly 40 per cent of their original price tag.

Being a current AMG offering, you would expect servicing prices to be high, but SPR Autos of Stockport will carry out an A service for just £150 plus VAT, and a B service for £300 plus VAT. New front brake discs and pads will set you back around £1,500 including labour and VAT, but four premium brand, 18-inch tyres will cost a more reasonable £760.

Road tax is on the high side at £870 in the car's first year, and £490 thereafter according to current rates. However, the E63's 30mpg plus fuel economy over long distances should take the sting out of ownership.

VERDICT

A great number of you will be in no doubt of the E500's appeal and pin your flag to its mast without hesitation, while

▲ The AMG biturbo ties thumping thrust to excellent efficiency.


▲ ◀ S model has 28bhp and 59lb ft more than a normal E63 AMG.

▼ Evolution II rims for this E500 Limited with Brabus brake upgrade.



others will look no further than its modern day equivalent, which is undeniably faster and more capable on any road you care to name.

However, on this day, it was the E500 Limited that we wanted to spend most time driving, its rudimentary controls keeping you in close contact with the action as it unfolds, with every nuggety bump and tingling vibration – totally absent in the highly polished E63 – informing and rewarding in equal measure. And as good as the impressively efficient AMG looks, the E500's 'less is more' brutality gets another big tick from us.

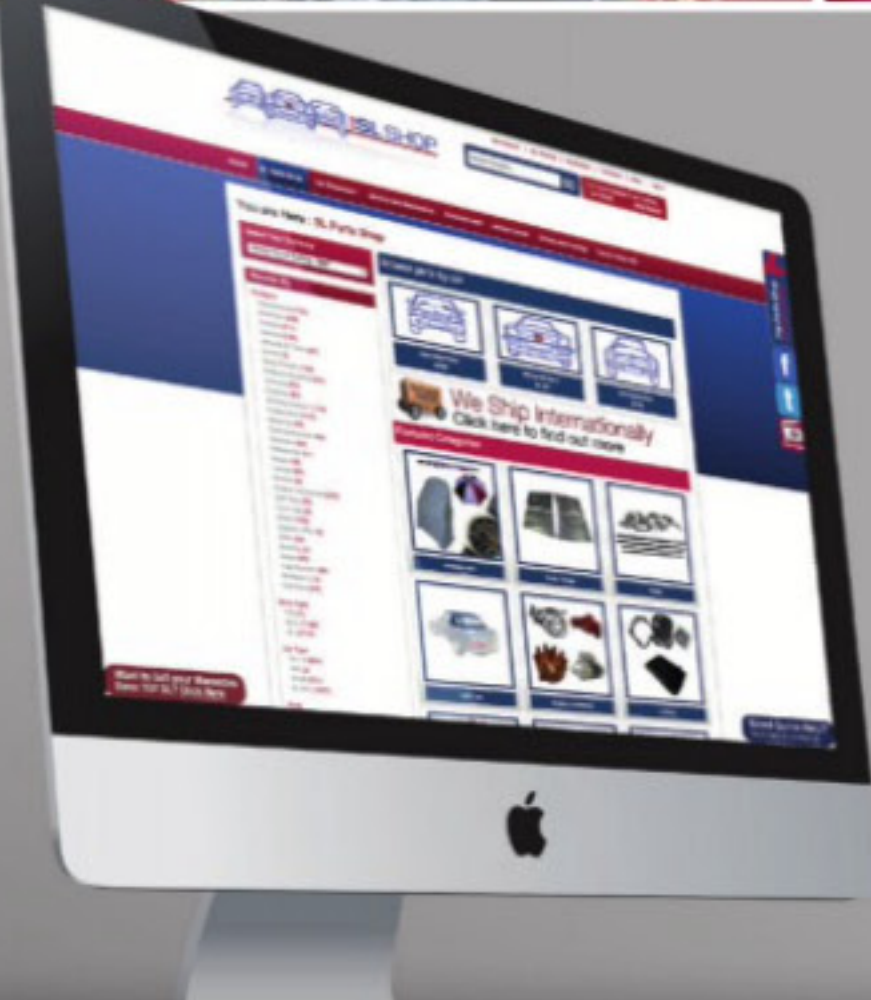
They are both classics, but one of these E-Classes is even more deserving of that title than the other. 

► Thank you to **Avantgarde** in Staffordshire for the loan of the E500 Limited **Tel** 01827 288177 **Web** www.avantgardecars.co.uk and to **SPR Autos** in Cheshire for servicing and parts costs **Tel** 0161 480 6095 **Web** www.mercedescarservicing.co.uk





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350SL & 450SLC

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With perfectly formed roads sweeping through the South African countryside and offering much to the keen driver, Mercedes' 107-series coupe and roadster made ideal transport for the job

WORDS WILHELM LUTJEHARMS
IMAGES CHARLES RUSSELL





“As the years have passed, their values have bottomed out and more recently started to climb”



HOW DO YOU DETERMINE THE VALUE of an older car? It is a question that fuels great debate. The easy answer is: the amount a buyer is willing to pay for it. Depending on your preference, there are cars that might seem like a bargain. Or, if current market favourites are more to your taste, then you might need to fork out more than you originally anticipated.

Mercedes' SL has one of the longest family trees in the manufacturer's history. Of course, there is the small matter of the car that laid the foundations – the astonishingly beautiful 300SL Gullwing of 1954. The squarer design of the 1971 to 1989 R107 SLs might not appeal to all buyers, but as the years have passed, their values have bottomed out and more recently started to climb. They don't come close to the Pagodas that came directly before, and

the succeeding R129 SL can be sourced, in most instances, for even less.

Look at the C107 SLC, built from 1971 to 1981, and it is an altogether different story, the two-door coupe bearing a nameplate that had no past. During early development of the new Mercedes-AMG GT, the internet was rife with rumours that it would be called the SLC. Had this been the case, I'm sure it would have had a positive influence on how the original SLC is

perceived by Mercedes-Benz supporters (note that the SLC badge is making a comeback on the facelifted, 172-series SLK, due in 2016).

LONG LOST RELATIVE

From a distance, the SLC might appear as a hardtop version of the SL roadster. But, parked side by side, and driving them back-to-back, each car has its own identity, tailored for their respective market segments. Both these Mercedes belong to a collector in South Africa's lush and green Southern Cape, around 300 miles east of Cape Town.

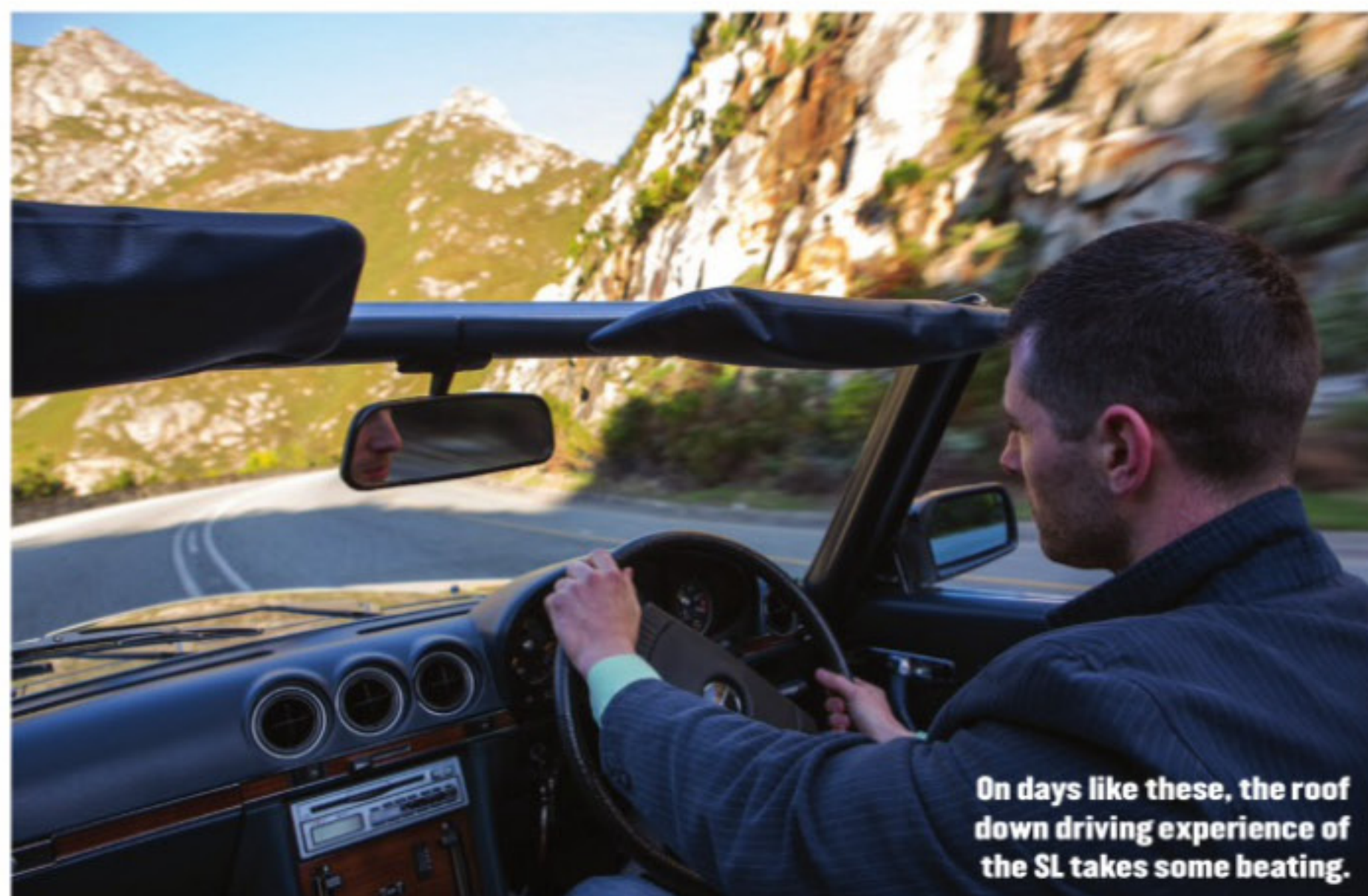
This 350SL was purchased by its current keeper in 1989, and is finished in rare and quite beautiful Magnetite Blue (code 931), with a perfectly matched interior. Rolling off the production line

▼ Magnetite Blue metallic one of the SL's best shades, surely.

▼ Light alloy wheels size 15-inch are the perfect complement.



350SL & 450SLC



On days like these, the roof down driving experience of the SL takes some beating.

“I point the SL’s nose along a mountain pass and the car quickly settles into a comfortable rhythm”



The 350SL was offered with an old school, three-speed automatic transmission.

JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz 350SL (R107)

ENGINE
M116 3,499cc V8

POWER
192bhp@5,500rpm

TORQUE
203lb ft@4,000rpm

TRANSMISSION
3-SPEED AUTO, RWD

WEIGHT **1,540kg**

0-62MPH **10.1sec**

TOP SPEED **124MPH**

FUEL CONSUMPTION
21.7mpg

YEARS PRODUCED
1971-1980

Mercedes-Benz 450SLC (C107)

ENGINE
M117 4,520cc V8

POWER
214bhp@5,000rpm

TORQUE
265lb ft@3,250rpm

TRANSMISSION
3-SPEED AUTO, RWD

WEIGHT **1,630kg**

0-62MPH **9.3sec**

TOP SPEED **130MPH**

FUEL CONSUMPTION
19.5mpg

YEARS PRODUCED
1972-1980

Figures for a 1978 350SL and a 1981 450SLC as pictured; fuel consumption determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 110km/h, 68mph) plus 10 per cent

in 1978, it has covered 81,000 miles since then but you'd be hard pressed to tell. The headlights' small wiper blades are an uncommon sight in South Africa, pointing to this SL's roots. It was probably originally earmarked for the UK market as the water temperature is indicated in Fahrenheit and the oil pressure in lb/square inch, as opposed to Celsius and bar respectively.

The SLC was unveiled at the Paris motor show in October 1971, three months after production was halted on the preceding W111 coupe. Interestingly, this particular 450SLC is a more recent purchase by its owner. I presumed this was a result of the rising interest in its breed, but the collector merely wanted to add the car to his collection of Mercedes-Benz coupes. While the 350SL has the 3.5-litre V8 (M116), this 450SLC has the more potent 4.5-litre V8 (M117), and both engines are connected to three-speed automatic transmissions.

While Charles Russell captures the first pictures, I take a proper look at the longer wheelbase SLC, which sits on the road in a different kind of way to the SL. In terms of elegance and style, the longer rear half of the SLC certainly looks classier than the shorter and compact dimensions of the SL, to these eyes at least. The 355mm longer wheelbase plays another vital role (which I'll get to shortly) once you are behind the wheel.

Moving to its soft topped counterpart and opening the heavy, solid door, the compact cabin is roomy enough for two adults, while the area behind the front seats offers additional luggage space. Twisting the key in the ignition, the 350SL's subsequent voice is not as deep and purposeful as that of the 450SLC.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Pulling away, I point the SL's nose along a mountain pass and the car quickly settles into a comfortable rhythm. I am probably working the engine harder than I would a 500SL's, but the 192bhp

relaxing cruise and begin appreciating the scenic backdrop, I soon forget about the slight body flex. With the speedometer at an indicated 60mph, the engine revs at 3,000rpm in top gear.

Parking the 350SL at a lookout point, I discuss my findings with the owner. He's keen for me to waste no time getting behind the wheel of the SLC. I oblige and, with the engine ticking over, I sense a distinctly more serious atmosphere surrounding this car. Unlike today's powerful machines with engineered exhaust tones, the aural experience from these earlier cars is



V8 pulls with undeniable vigour, particularly in the final third of its rev range. With the steering wheel close to the dashboard and the recirculating ball system itself devoid of the slack found in many R107s these days, I feel totally in control of the car.

Some scuttle shake confirms that this is an old droptop, but as I settle into a

dominated by their engine sound. The cabin feels familiar to that of the SL, although there is a welcoming amount of additional space for passengers in the rear. The odo indicates 170,000km (almost 106,000 miles), most of which were done by previous owners; the current owner bought the car around four years ago. Since then, it has

▲ M116 V8 used Bosch K-Jetronic injection from February 1976.

▲ The M117's extra torque made a great impression in the SLC.

350SL & 450SLC

“As a long distance cruiser, or even just for a Sunday drive, there is a strong case for the SLC”



► required no mechanical work, and it was given a respray in the original colour: Champagne metallic.

The familiar view over the bonnet could fool you into believing you are driving a 107-series roadster. However, the moment you reach for the safety belt, you realise it is a different car, as the belt is positioned further back. I press the throttle pedal close to the floor and there is noticeably more torque available from below 3,000rpm compared to what the 350SL offers.

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

Press the 450SLC's throttle pedal to its squishy stop and the car's greater performance envelope really comes to the fore. This SLC pulls more strongly than the SL and, owing to the longer wheelbase, it is marginally more stable through corners; it feels as though it settles more quickly after bumps and is generally more composed overall.

This tidy stance sees me pushing the car a little harder and moving the gearlever into the S position, which



deploys a lower gear and holds it as the rev needle surges to the redline.

After driving both cars, it is clear they are from the same era and – equally unsurprising – offer a similar driving experience. Of course, the SL's roof can

▲ The second gear of three does most of the legwork.

▲ Super wide front seats and a huge helm in this two-door coupe.

◀ Over 170,000km (105,000 miles) matter not to the SLC.

▼ What would be your 107-series Mercedes of choice? SL or SLC?

be lowered, which is enough for many buyers to not even consider the SLC. However, as a long distance cruiser, or even just for a Sunday drive, there is a strong case for the SLC. The pillarless side profile and those unique vertical blinds are two elements, I think, which make it so attractive. Motorsport enthusiasts will also point out the SLC's success in world rallying.

As one fellow enthusiast and collector once told me, "If the roof drops, the price goes up." A valid comment, but the gentle breeze that comes your way with the SLC's side windows lowered is very close to the experience offered by the SL.

As such a healthy number of SLCs were produced (62,888 compared to 237,287 SLs), it is understandable that the average buyer doesn't regard them as collectable, or as appealing as their droptop sibling – and that will probably be the case for the immediate future.

However, as demand for R107 SLs continues to increase, it is inevitable that the roadsters will drag up values of their coupe counterparts and allow them to step out of the long shadow that has shrouded them for so long.



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Living *legend*

Just 502 Evolution II versions of the 190E 2.5-16 were made by Mercedes-Benz, and this pristine example now finds itself in New Zealand, still with under 3,000km on the clock

WORDS AND IMAGES ANDY KERR





▲ Rule bending aero on Evolution II caused uproar in racing world.

HAS ANY COMPACT THREE-pointed star exuded a more ominous sense of cool than the Evolution II, the winged wonder that recently celebrated its 25th birthday? Time has scarcely dulled the dramatic looks and only served to fuel the desirability (and value) of a car based on the conservative W201 saloon that first appeared eight years earlier.

In the case of the mid production example driven here – number 262 of 502 that rolled out of Untertürkheim in 1990 – time seems to have had no impact on the car's factory fresh appearance. At first glance it's truly exceptional – genuinely as new – which you might expect of a car that has covered merely 2,700 dry kilometres (just shy of 1,700 miles) and changed hands twice, moving from the UK to New Zealand four years ago.

But can the 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II still excite the keen driver like it does the collector's eye?

NUMBER 262

So tight are the panel gaps on a contemporary Mercedes that the width of the gaps on the 190E broadcast the age of the car, and it's surprising how much the driver's seat squab sinks as you plant yourself behind the sober four-spoke steering wheel (it's a characteristic of these comfortable leather Recaros rather than a wear and tear issue).

“Can it still excite the keen driver like it does the collector's eye?”



190E 2.5-16 Evolution II

► You didn't have endless options when specifying your Evolution II, and *blauschwarz* (blue-black) metallic was mandatory, but I think the original Channel Islands owner of number 262 got it right by opting for full leather and a tasteful wood insert around the gearshift lever area only.

This cabin treatment seems preferable to those appointed with chequered cloth upholstery and wood across the dashboard. Air conditioning and a powered sunroof added weight and a little luxury, and are both present.

This minimal mileage car had been driven twice in the previous three years, meaning a complete fluid change and comprehensive mechanical check were necessary before exploring the performance. For convenience, the work was carried out by an authorised Ferrari workshop whose technicians are well accustomed to seldom used, high

performance cars. No issues were reported and the foreman encouraged full use of the performance once the car was up to temperature.

That's not the sort of invitation we'd ever decline, but you need to respect an owner's desire to preserve the condition of a rare collectable, and with the ultra low mileage adding significantly to the six-figure value of this car, we were conscious that even a 30-mile drive would tack on two per cent to the odometer reading. As it turned out, that two per cent was enough to get a good feel for the car on fast flowing roads and through familiar bends on the outskirts of Auckland.

Fickle weather intervened, however, so we needed two bites at the cherry to avoid getting caught up in a deluge. At least that provided a good excuse for keeping the Mercedes overnight and getting a second taste of the Evolution II from cold at 6:30am on a muggy Sunday morning.

RESIDENT EVO

Being able to house such a car for 24 hours means you have time to closely inspect every facet of it and maybe identify a few faults or blemishes that weren't apparent on a typical two-hour arrive, drive and



▲ 245/50ZR17 rubber – widest and lowest profile of any 190E.

depart. But this car is pretty much as it left the factory, judging by the pristine pedal rubbers, the unmarked gearlever, the perfectly packed first aid kit, and a

scrupulously clean fuel filler cap that has probably only been opened on a dozen occasions. Like the sun visors, the headlight dial is stiff to turn, confirming minimal use, and it looks as though most buttons on the original Becker head unit have never been prodded.

More importantly, the wheels and bodywork are virtually unmarked although the perforated metal surround for the twin exhaust pipes shows some light corrosion after a quarter of a century, enough for concours judges to deduct a point. And while the Dunlop tyres look new, they are showing their age under close inspection with some faint cracks in the tread grooves. Their manufacture date does not appear to be on the outer sidewalls, rather just confirmation of their irregular 245/40ZR17 size.

The Evolution II looks like it could wake up the neighbourhood upon start-up, but it doesn't come close.

◀ Chassis 262; 500 Evo II's available to buy – final two for factory.



“The ride height can be raised or lowered by up to 45mm in two increments”

Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II (W201)

ENGINE
M102 2,463cc 4-cyl

POWER
232bhp@7,200rpm

TORQUE
181lb ft@5,000-6,000rpm

TRANSMISSION
5-SPEED MANUAL, RWD

WEIGHT **1,340kg**

0-62MPH **7.1sec**

TOP SPEED **155MPH**

FUEL CONSUMPTION
21.2mpg

YEAR PRODUCED **1990**

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



There's a bit of winding before the 2.5 fires and settles at a 1,000rpm idle that's initially a little lumpy. A small stab of the throttle suggests keen response but modest torque down low. It scarcely shouts fire-breathing touring car and there is not even much bark from the factory exhaust system.

The dog leg Getrag gearshift has had very little use, of course, and being cold, feels a bit stiff when engaging first and especially when fishing for reverse, which requires a lift-pull-place action to the top left of the gate.

But I'm away smoothly and easily, and slightly surprised by the absence of any drama, the lightness of clutch and accelerator, and the lightness of the helm. The front tyres might be broad and relatively low in profile but this is a light-middleweight at 1,340kg. As is the case with any 190, the far sided wing mirror is a narrow unit, but what's more restrictive is the view through the rear screen, mainly due to the fairing that extends down from the roof line and deflects air flow towards the tall wing.

It won't benefit me much this morning, but that adjustable rear wing and the equally dramatic front splitter have the ability to seriously reduce lift while increasing high speed stability. The upper part of the wing has an adjustable flap on its trailing edge, while the lower part that sits flush with the bootlid can also be moved through a range of angles to significantly increase downforce. At the front, a deep spoiler combines with the prominent (and very vulnerable) splitter that can be lowered to increase downforce and reduce the amount of air flowing beneath the car.

The ride height can be raised or lowered by up to 45mm in two



▲▲ Few differences between the Evo II and a regular W201 190.

▲ L to R: gauge for oil temperature, digital stopwatch, voltmeter.

▲► This Evolution II has covered under 1,700 miles since new.

increments. An easy-to-sight dashboard button activates the height adjustment system, which combines with hydro-pneumatic self levelling suspension to keep cornering attitude constant.

Meanwhile, the harbour bridge wheelarches smooth air flow along the flanks and accommodate huge slicks on 19-inch rims in DTM racing spec. To my eyes, the Evolution II still stands very strongly on its elegant factory 17s.

ARCH ENEMY

On deserted city roads soon after dawn, the Evolution II warms to its task in second and third gears, happily running at

3,000rpm from where I work the broad mid range. It instantly impresses as being usefully quick and precise in its actions.

Those compact dimensions certainly make it feel agile: body roll is well contained through bends and the steering is communicative, if not particularly quick. The brakes are an early highlight, feeling strong and well moderated from the get-go. And no wonder – they're 300mm discs up front (278mm rears) clamped by four-pot Brembo calipers. Better still, the ride quality is much more compliant than I was expecting, especially given the unknown age of the tyres.



► The Evo II corners on rails yet remains supple – a neat trick.

190E 2.5-16 Evolution II

The other 16-valve 190s

190E 2.3-16 (1984-1988)

Power/torque 182bhp/173lb ft

0-62mph 7.5sec

Top speed 143mph

Number built 19,487



190E 2.5-16 (1988-1993)

Power/torque 192bhp/173lb ft

0-62mph 7.5sec

Top speed 146mph

Number built 5,743



190E 2.5-16 Evolution (1989)

Power/torque 192bhp/173lb ft

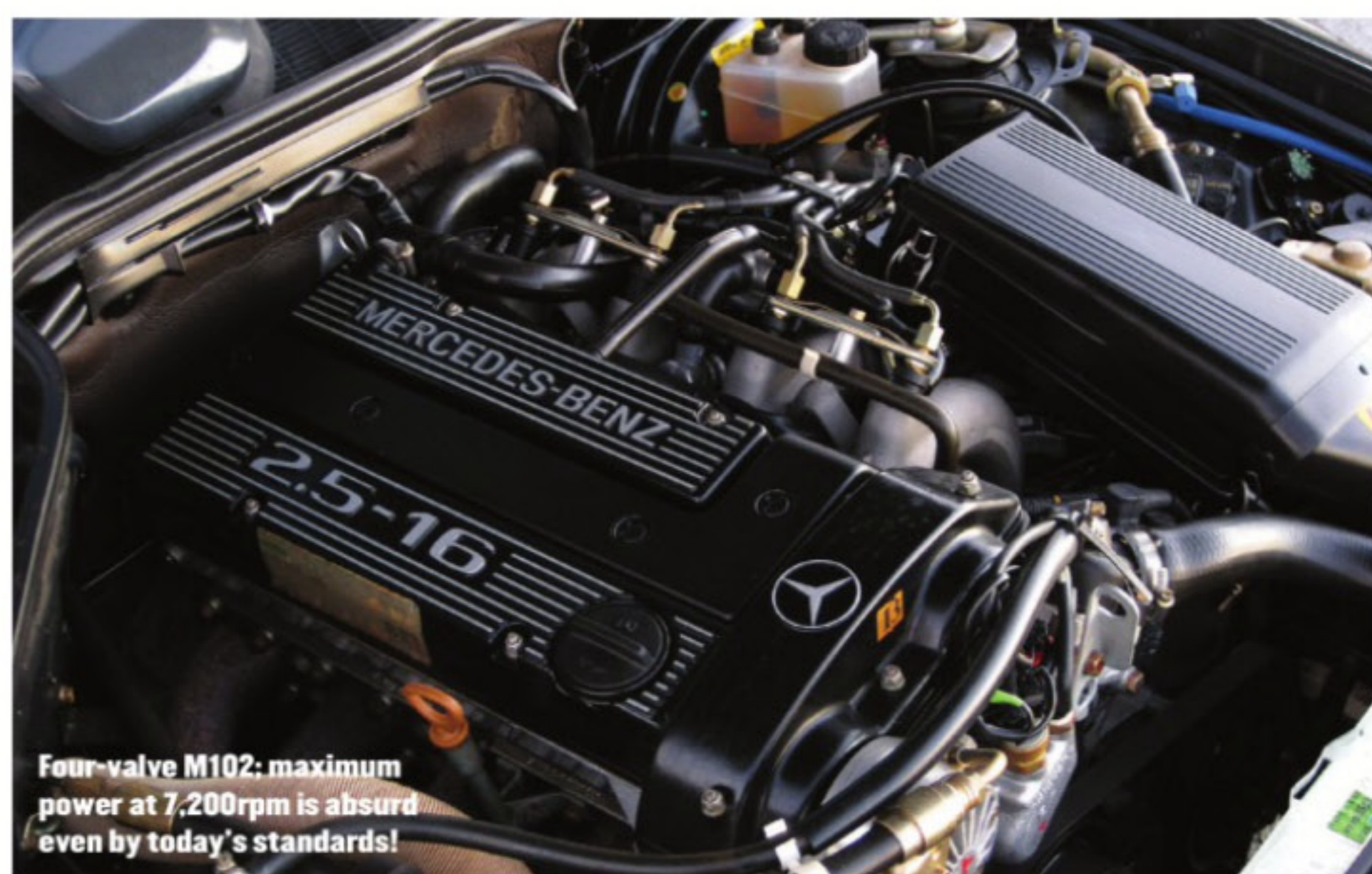
0-62mph 7.7sec

Top speed 143mph

Number built 502



All figures for early cars with a five-speed manual gearbox



Four-valve M102: maximum power at 7,200rpm is absurd even by today's standards!

the throttle. For me, it's a short shift to fifth gear before bringing the speed down to a near legal figure, putting the powerful brakes to work at an off-ramp and repeating the through-the-gears acceleration test with a bit more urgency as the morning sunlight really starts to fade.

DAWN RAID

It's an all too brief taste of the competition pedigree that was famously forged in the intense cut and thrust of the DTM touring car series, where the racing version of the Evolution II enjoyed terrific success. Not that current keeper Nigel Thomson was fully aware of its track record when he secured this superior example.

"I first became aware of the Evo II when I saw an advertisement for one in a classic sports car magazine about 15 years ago, and it really did catch my eye.

I might subsequently have seen a photo of one other, but never saw one in the flesh. And then this example appeared for sale about four years ago, again in the same magazine. I really like the shape, the rarity, the colour, the guards, wheels and spoilers. And I appreciate that it is one of the more successful Mercedes racing saloons.

"I bought a Ferrari 308GTB from the UK at the same time and they came down to New Zealand on the same ship, and I must admit to being more impressed and pleased with the Mercedes than the Ferrari."

No doubt Nigel is equally pleased with the Evolution II's investment potential. With values rising strongly over the past few years, and the best examples now exceeding £100,000, who knows what this Mercedes-Benz would achieve if a major auction house offered the car at an international sale.

► With a few photographs taken, it's necessary to really push on for an open road session, as the solid bank of clouds building on the horizon looks as dark as the Evolution II's paintwork. And so I discover the car's raison d'être on an empty motorway, carving up the slip road in third gear and then extending the engine in fourth, letting it soar fluently towards the 7,700rpm redline.

Maximum torque doesn't arrive until 5,000rpm (and is still present at 6,000) and at such engine speeds there's not only solid shove but plenty of bite to

"Extending the engine in fourth gear, I let it soar fluently towards the 7,700rpm redline"



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“This unique 280CE was employed as Lancaster Group’s show car”



Red hot chili *pepper*

As the fastest 123-series coupe built by Mercedes-Benz's road car division, this 280CE was the ideal car to showcase Lorinser's styling package in the 1980s

WORDS GUY BAKER IMAGES CRAIG PUSEY





“The ride is a revelation, with comfort a key ingredient in the C123’s success”

MERCEDES-BENZ HAS A DISTINGUISHED history of producing plush, six-cylinder coupes, which can be traced back to the W187 Mercedes-Benz 220 of 1951. And although the family tree subsequently diverged from that point, with different kinds of coupes aimed at different buyers, the C123 – based on the huge selling 123-series saloon – proved to be one of the most successful. The C123’s endearing combination of good looks, rock solid build quality and comfortable performance proved a winning formula, with close to 100,000 cars sold worldwide.

However, UK buyers had to pay through the nose to possess a slice of C123 action (there was a 12-month waiting list in Europe for a time) with the four-cylinder 230CE outselling its six-cylinder 280CE big brother by a considerable margin – probably purely because it was cheaper.

A well specced 280CE then, was an executive’s dream drive. And Mercedes offered wealthy buyers an extensive options list to match their ambition. If you were after the ultimate in executive exclusivity though, you could even purchase your 280CE replete with all manner of Lorinser adornments – leaving it looking just like this example.

With the car’s first owner believed to have been the Managing Director of Lancaster Group Mercedes-Benz (part of the Jardine Motors Group empire, which now owns McLaren London in Knightsbridge) this unique 280CE was employed as Lancaster Group’s show car, and boasts a comprehensive Lorinser styling package.

Registered in the UK in 1986, it’s one of the very last 280CE sold new by Mercedes-Benz, production of the 123-series coupe ending in August 1985.

Launched in January 1976, Mercedes’ W123 saloon replaced the somewhat aging W115 model and came with a longer wheelbase and a bold front end boasting large, rectangular headlights. The C123 soon followed, with more sweeping styling and – interestingly – a slightly shorter wheelbase. There were a variety of engines to choose from, with the 1977-on 280CE the pick of the range. The power output of the DOHC, 2,746cc, 12-valve straight-six (M110) was originally 175bhp, which then rose to 182bhp from April 1978 – with a small torque increase from 173 to 177lb ft.

SIX-CYLINDER

As much about cruising in comfort as travelling rapidly, the manual car dipped under the 10-second mark to 62mph. Buyers could opt for a four-speed automatic, as fitted to this red example, and complete the benchmark sprint in 10.8 seconds. Power assisted disc brakes were standard on all cars.

Demand for the C123 was high, with a substantial waiting list for new cars

during the first few years of production. But by 1982 it was time for a facelift, with all models receiving ‘wideband’ headlights and air flow deflectors on the front pillars to reduce noise levels. A new five-speed manual transmission was also made available.

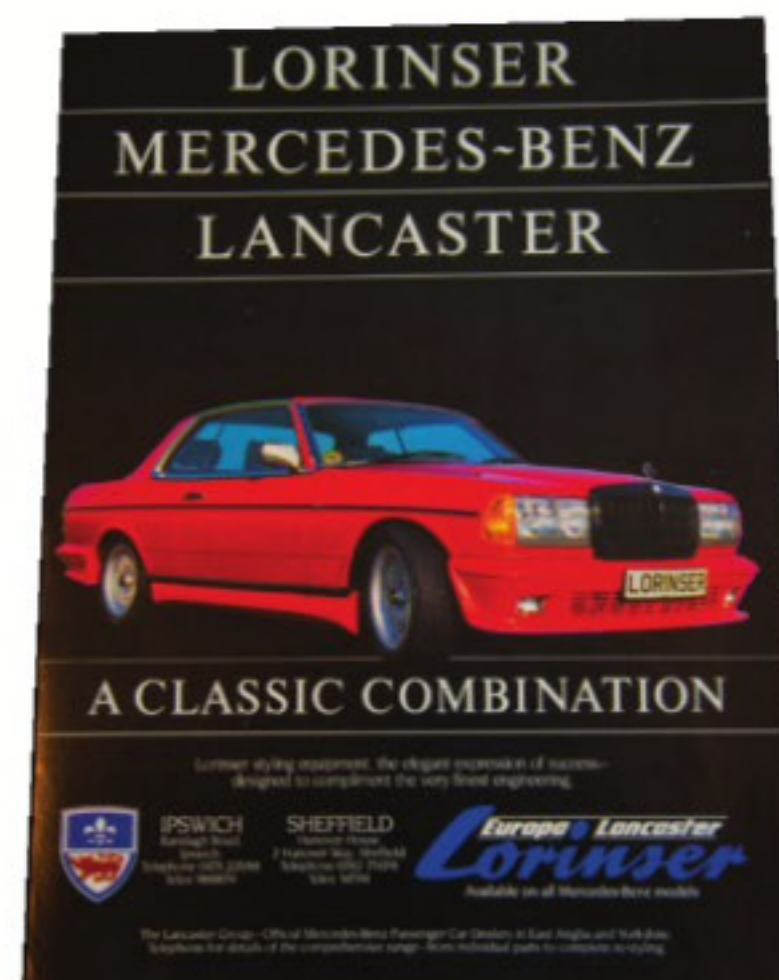
ALS, an early derivative of ABS, was offered from August 1980, and a driver’s airbag could be specified from January 1982. Buyers with deep pockets could also select items such as electric windows with rear seat switches, central locking, a sunroof, air conditioning, cruise control and even heated seats from an extensive Mercedes options list.

But this red car received something more select – a Lorinser styling pack, complete with a Lorinser steering wheel, full chrome detailing (including the windscreen surrounds, mirrors and door handles), that bold, black front grille, body coloured bumpers and side sills, black centred Rial alloys and a

Blaupunkt stereo. Described by its accompanying – and original – Lorinser Sports Service documentation as ‘the elegant expression of success’ this little lot gives the smooth looking 123-series coupe much greater visual impact.

In addition, the first Lancaster owner also ticked a few Mercedes options boxes, so this 280CE also comes with anti lock brakes, cruise control, a bespoke cream leather interior retrim and a sunroof. Sadly, there were no Lorinser

performance modifications carried out. W123 saloon production ended in



▲ The car featured was the one used for Lorinser’s UK brochure.

Mercedes-Benz 280CE (C123)

ENGINE
M110 2,746cc 6-cyl

POWER
182bhp@5,800rpm

TORQUE
177lb ft@4,500rpm

TRANSMISSION
4-SPEED AUTO, RWD

WEIGHT 1,460kg

0-62MPH 10.8sec

TOP SPEED 121MPH

FUEL CONSUMPTION 19.1mpg

YEARS PRODUCED
1977-1985

Figures for a 1985 car (registered in 1986) as pictured; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

◀ Double-wishbone front suspension for this 30-year old Benz.



November 1985, with the 123-series coupe superseded by the 124-series coupe (C124) in the spring of 1987.

Start up this Benz and at first the engine sounds quite tappety – the mechanical fuel injection on the 280CE is known for being noisy. But things soon settle down as the straight-six gets into its stride. The ride is a revelation, with comfort a key ingredient in the C123's success – this car's suspension feels forgiving but not slack.

RED ALERT

The low driving position is near perfect, with surprisingly little adjustment needed whilst the comfy seats feel plush, but don't offer as much lateral support as modern sports seats. And that goes hand in glove with this car's character – it's happiest when cruising, rather than cornering hard.

The steering requires a bit of getting used to – the wheel is quite large and compared to say, the latest E-Class coupe, requires a lot more effort to turn. But you can feel this 280CE's tyres responding to your inputs, with very respectable handling as a result.

How well a C123 corners is a great barometer of its overall health – worn recirculating ball steering joints and tired rear subframe mounts can result in horribly vague steering responses, but fix these and the handling is usually transformed. And this example feels reassuringly solid and positive, with strong brakes to match.

If you fancy a well maintained 280CE of your own, a degree of patience is required. With relatively few cars advertised for sale, finding a well

▼ Wider rear tyres ensure better grip in wet conditions.

▼▼ Full cream leather interior option fitted by Mercedes-Benz.

maintained example like this will take some time. There are 280CEs advertised for as little as £1,500, but anything at this price is likely to require a full restoration at significant cost. Better examples requiring some TLC go for £4,000 to £7,000, with rare concours examples fetching £10,000 plus.



280CE by Lorinser



Lorinser

▲ Lorinser's three-spoke helm wrapped in black leather.

► Period Rial alloys, size 15-inch, replace the standard 14s.

Founded in 1930 by mechanic Erwin Lorinser, the Lorinser company quickly became accepted as an authorised reseller of private and commercial vehicles by Daimler Benz. In 1976, Erwin's son Manfred started Lorinser Sports Service, specialising in tuning primarily Mercedes vehicles.

Initially focusing on engine enhancements, the business slowly expanded to incorporate styling modifications too. Thanks to an exceptional reputation, Lorinser has been able to attract a number of celebrity customers over the years, and with dealerships in no less than 42 countries now claims a worldwide reputation for individuality and technical excellence.

► By far the biggest issue with 123-series Mercedes is corrosion. Rust can effect almost every part of a C123, with poor sealing of the frameless door windows a well known cause of water ingress. It's essential these are replaced at a cost of around £400 per side.

Any significant water entering the vehicle causes the floorpan to rust, so although some quite presentable cars can seem good, always examine them closely for traces of water under the carpets. This readily gets trapped under the cabin's sound deadening insulation, with disastrous results.

BUYER'S CHECKS

The bottoms of the doors are very prone to corrosion too, so check their condition by pulling the rubber seal away from the edge. Inner and outer

sills, diffs, rear arches and front valences, sunroof drains and jacking points can also rot, and check underneath the battery tray too.

Other things to look out for include smoking exhausts (suggesting possible valve guide wear), failed dashboard lights (the potentiometer probably needs replacement), blown exhausts, brakes that need a major overhaul, clogged fuel pump filters and worn valve stem seals/guides which burn oil on the overrun, or when pulling away. This last issue requires major work, as the cylinder head needs to come off.

Lastly, your 280CE should ideally come with a full service history – with fresh oil every 3,000 to 6,000 miles (depending on use), and a new timing chain every five or six years. This is relatively easy to change, but does require around three hours labour.

So owning a 280CE is not without its foibles, but if you're prepared to spend sensible money on a rust free 280CE with a provenance like this one (for sale – contact info@mercedesenthusiast.co.uk for more details) then you can look forward to many years of unique and pleasurable motoring – with plenty of envious looks guaranteed.

► Thank you to **Mark Cosovich** at **W123 World Web** w123world.com, **Davies Engineering Web** daviesengineering.com and **Phil Jackson** for their assistance with this 280CE by Lorinser feature

“Values of the best 123s are set to rise, as numbers are dwindling”





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560SECs



Muscle *memories*

Two low mile, dark coloured 560SECs offer different takes on the illustrious 1980s AMG theme

WORDS AND IMAGES REED HITCHCOCK



“The SEC was the ultimate combination of quality, style and performance”

THINK TOP COUPES OF THE 1980s and, even for the uninitiated, the 126-series Mercedes-Benz SEC jumps to mind. It is among the most attractive cars made during what would become the modern classic era, and was an aspirational car along the lines of the Porsche 928 and BMW 635CSi.

Each car above had a distinct personality, along with its own pros and cons, but for me and plenty more motoring enthusiasts like me, the Mercedes-Benz SEC provided the ultimate combination of quality, style and performance among its contemporaries. Today, top examples are highly sought after and command a premium entry fee.

Head of the SEC class was the late 1985 to late 1991 560SEC. The power output of its 5,547cc M117 V8 motor ranged from 239bhp in US

specification, to 296bhp in higher compression European versions built from September 1987 that did without a catalytic converter (torque ranged from 288lb ft to 336lb ft). All iterations of the 560SEC performed admirably for the day, with performance figures that came close to, matched or bettered contemporary performance cars including the Corvette, Porsche 911, and Ferrari 308 GTS. Mercedes' 126-series SEC was certainly no slouch, and it wore a tailored suit to boot.

A PLACE IN HISTORY

Despite such a complete and successful overall package, enthusiasts sometimes can't leave well enough alone. In the 1980s, where Mercedes cars were concerned, the best of the best in terms of taking perfectly good cars and making them intriguingly unique, if not wholly better, was AMG. Bear in mind that these were the days before AMG was a ►

► division of Daimler-Benz AG, rather than a relatively small tuning shop in the German hamlet of Affalterbach, founded by a pair of ambitious former Mercedes-Benz engineers.

The company first made its mark with modified W109 300SEL 6.3s, and went on to build cars like the six-litre, DOHC V8 powered W124 Hammers capable of over 200mph. Its technicians knew cars, engineering and Mercedes, and were more than qualified to tackle the top of the line.

The 1980s AMG team also tended toward understatement, at least in comparison with other tuners of the day like Lorinser, Koenig, and Gemballa, which were more extreme with huge rear flares, gold adornments, and liberal application of gauche colours and materials to transform admittedly sober driving environments into something more akin to a Vegas lounge.

Not that AMG's knowledge couldn't be used to create something on the far side of tasteful, but cars modified by AMG were aimed at enhancing the driving experience both in the engine bay and from the driver's seat. If the cars emerged looking and feeling a little more aggressive, then so be it.

BLACK ART

The SECs here represent variations on a theme, if you will. On one hand we have Henry Sterne's conservatively modified, 1991, US version 560SEC, and Marco Lopez's less subtle, Japanese delivery/European specification 560SEC widebody from 1988. I am not here to compare the cars, as each is unique in its expression of itself, and one is not better than the other. Instead, I submit both for your consideration, one probably more aligned with your own taste and budget than the other.

I can assure you up front that both are glorious cars in their own right, and in comparable condition. Like any pampered Mercedes-Benz of this vintage, neither has given up much to the ravages of weather and time.

Don't get me wrong – the 126-series coupe (C126) is not a small car. In fact, they take up a fair amount of real estate even in coupe form. However, juxtaposed with the widebody, Henry Sterne's car is relatively svelte.

At first glance, it looks like a stock, US 560SEC with 17-inch AMG 'Aero' wheels where 15-inch factory alloys once lived. And then you look a little closer – because you're a Mercedes-Benz enthusiast and that's what we do.

Upon closer inspection you start to notice the details. Among the key



▲ The cabin shows little use with 27,000 miles on the clock.

giveaways that this car is something special is the monochromatic paint treatment. What had been several miles of brightwork were transformed by AMG to body colour, thus eliminating some of the luxurious, jewel like quality of a stock SEC in favour of a somewhat more masculine effect.

That effect is further enhanced by a US spec, 'dog ear' air dam and side skirts – all finished in the same Pearl Black as the rest of the car. Originally, the car had an AMG rear spoiler with integrated third brake light (like the other car has), but that was removed at some point earlier in the car's life.

On the inside, Henry's car looks like a brand new, US spec 560SEC. They all came optioned about the same: leather, automatic climate control, passenger airbag, seat heaters, city horns, and so on. With less than 27,000 miles under its belt, everything looks, feels and functions as it did in 1991.

Like the exterior, however, closer inspection of the interior reveals a bigger story. This car was originally owned by a professional NBA basketball player who spared no expense, not only with the purchase and

upkeep of the car, but also on aftermarket electronics, including an integrated K40 stealth radar detector and an exclusive, first generation Sony XES audio system with custom rear deck and fittings. All in, the electronic accoutrements probably contributed an additional \$20,000 to the overall cost of the car when new.

Mechanically, the only obvious clue to this 560SEC being something extraordinary is the AMG Sebring

“You can feel the extra power from this SEC widebody's European spec motor”

sports exhaust, but that's not all. This US spec coupe also benefits from the freer breathing that AMG manifolds have to offer. The exhaust modifications are estimated to add about 30bhp for a net output approaching 270bhp.

AMG didn't just tweak the engine, though. It also replaced the luxury tuned and rear self levelling factory suspension with AMG springs and re-valved Bilstein shock absorbers, resulting in a still compliant but substantially firmer ride. It's not teeth rattling, but this isn't your grandfather's SEC, either. That said, this car is the kinder, gentler version of the AMG 126-series coupe. Of the two here, this example is the gentleman's car.

WIDER, FASTER, MEANER

The widebodied SEC certainly doesn't give any impression of being overweight, but it definitely sits on



▼ Henry Sterne (left) and Marco Lopez share a love for the 560SEC.



wider haunches than the stock coupe. The 1980s saw a lot of experimentation with body modifications with the advent of simpler to use materials and also due to the availability of more suspension, wheel, and tyre options.

The 126 coupe was a natural for a widebody modification. Its broad, substantial wings were more than adequate for change without giving them a 'bolted-on' appearance. Several tuners attempted modifications of this nature, but the AMG version is arguably the best executed. To the untrained eye, this 560SEC looks as if it could've emerged from the factory that way – not unlike Mercedes' own modifications for the W124 500E/E500.

Marco Lopez has clearly fallen head over heels for his Japanese delivery AMG widebody, reckoning it to be "second only to the female form". Side by side with Henry's car, it's downright macho. Although the car has a

distinctively 1980s look, it appears – like any clean C126 – a very modern automobile. By the seat of the pants, you can feel the extra power from the higher compression, European spec motor but, on the whole, the car is only a tad more brutish than the milder US example.

Wheelarch modifications aside, Marco's Mercedes-Benz is similar to Henry's coupe in the suspension department, as well as the lower front and side body add ons. The widebody, however, retains its AMG rear spoiler. Marco's SEC also has 17-inch, three-

▲ This 1991 560SEC was originally owned by a basketball star.

▲▲ AMG Sebring exhaust and deeper AMG rear bumper.

▲ Freer breathing boosts this V8's output towards 270bhp.

▼ Electric adjustment and heating for the widebody's Recaros.



piece body coloured alloy wheels by AMG/Oz nicely filling those expanded wheelarches. AMG's trademark monochromatic trim treatment works just as well here as on the other car. With just under 57,000km (about 35,000 miles), it all looks factory fresh.

IMPORTED STAR

The technical modifications on this car are also similar to its narrower brother, with AMG springs, AMG re-valved Bilstein shocks, and an AMG Sebring exhaust. Instead of the AMG manifolds, the widebody has AMG's 'Tri-Y' exhaust manifolds. On the European specification car, these modifications reportedly add close to 20bhp, for a total of almost 320bhp – a difference that you can definitely feel and hear compared to the US car.

Second only to the coupe's body modifications in terms of major changes is the widebody's interior. Opening ►



This 1988 560SEC widebody has the later and more potent, 5.5-litre M117 V8.

560SECs

► the door, you are met by what have to be the coolest Recaro seats I have ever seen: a pair of CSE chairs upholstered in black leather to match the factory fitted rear seats.

These chairs have more switches than any seat has a right to, and the switches mimic all the others scattered across the car's dashboard and console, giving a remarkably factory original appearance – as if Mercedes-Benz offered a distinct sport package of its own.

Facing the trick seats is a period AMG steering wheel, which does a great job of taking up less space than the SEC's humongous original item. Just beyond that wheel is a set of white faced gauges. It all works together in a glorious, 80s-fab package.

Mercedes-Benz produced nearly 29,000 560SEC coupes, each one exuding the class, luxury, and performance befitting the Mercedes flagship of its day. Firm numbers for AMG converted cars are elusive, but suffice to say they are few and far between – especially clean survivors.

HIT FOR EIGHT

Sitting here nearly 30 years on in a world of high output, multiple turbocharged, small displacement, computer controlled performance, it's almost impossible to imagine the excitement of seeing how the boys at an independent AMG might take a car built to be "the best or nothing" and

“It all works together in a glorious, 80s-fab package”

improve it through a series of old school modifications. You want better breathing? Certainly. Higher displacement? Absolutely. More camshafts? Yes! And in those days it was simple enough to make those changes without violating air quality acts or safety regulations. It was a simpler time. And that brings us back to these cars. As stated at the outset, this is not a comparison test, and having spent time with both I really wouldn't want to choose one over the other.

In an ideal world, I'd have a garage with room for both, but forced to choose only one, I'd likely go for the widebody, if for no other reason than I've never had a widebody before – and maybe because it's a smidge faster. 🏁



▲ The Sacco designed SEC takes modifications well.

◀ Smaller wheel with AMG embossed in its centre.

▼ AMG did a 32-valve 6.0 V8 with 380bhp/417lb ft twist.

▼▼ What is your preferred style of modified SEC?



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Mike Kunz – Mercedes-Benz Classic Center, USA



Spreading the *love*

▲ Mike Kunz joined Mercedes-Benz in the 1980s and has seen the Classic Center, USA (established in 2006) go from strength to strength, covering everything from parts to full restorations.

Coming through the ranks at Mercedes-Benz USA, Mike Kunz is now in charge of the company's Classic Center in California and anticipates a wealth of 'young classic' Mercedes becoming highly valuable to collectors in the near future

WORDS AND IMAGES REED HITCHCOCK

“Mike recalls his early days as an exciting time to be at Mercedes because the dynamic of the company was changing”



WE ALL HAVE A STORY ABOUT how we first became interested in cars, and for the vast majority of us that story probably starts with the first car we can remember.

For Mike Kunz, Manager of the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center, USA, the story is a familiar one, starting with vague recollections of the family Fiat 1100 in which he learned to drive as a youngster sitting on his father's lap.

This led to infatuation with all things automotive – exemplified by the sizeable stack of car photos squirrelled away in his office that he has accumulated over the years. In Mike's case, however, the automotive dreams of his youth became what some Mercedes-Benz fans consider just about the coolest job around.

Despite what one might think, Mike wasn't always the fountain of knowledge of all things classic Mercedes that he is today. His first car was an Opel GT hand-me-down from his father – the car in which he learned how to use a manual gearbox, and the one that taught him the basics of auto mechanics, given its regular need for care and feeding.

It wasn't until Mike was 21 and studying in Germany that he got his first taste of, and appreciation for, Mercedes-Benz cars. “My sister's boyfriend at the time asked me to purchase two Pagodas for him in Germany to send back to the States. We found two manual transmission cars for him and spent several months driving and enjoying them.” In no time at all, Mike realised that, in comparison with

his old Opel, the Mercedes were light years ahead in terms of engineering and build quality. “They were repairable – a very new concept to me.”

Mike graduated with a double major in German and Economics, and found himself in a soft job market back in his home state of New Jersey, just a stone's throw from Mercedes-Benz USA's headquarters in the quiet suburbs of Montvale. He'd been exploring a position with an international shipping company when his sister spotted a small classified advert in the local Bergen County newspaper – Mercedes-Benz USA was looking for a technical writer, and fluency in German was a requirement.

SOME WOULD CALL IT FATE

He submitted the obligatory résumé and cover letter, and then waited – but not for long. The job was in the Technical Literature Department, and the interviewer handed him an exploded schematic of a Solex carburettor and told him to explain it in English and German.

Unbeknown to his interviewer, this was essentially the same carburettor that Mike had spent years nurturing on that Opel GT. MBUSA hired him on the spot. The year was 1985, and Mercedes' US line up consisted of just four product lines: 201, 123, 126 and 107. Mike's

initial job was to write and translate service bulletins and owner's manuals. “They tried using the UK versions here, but those didn't fly given differences in the English language, so we started with the original German versions so the end product would make sense to American owners.”

He recalls his early days as an exciting time to be at Mercedes because the dynamic of the company was changing, with a shift away from almost singular



Mike's first car was an Opel GT which helped him land a job at Mercedes-Benz.

Mike Kunz – Mercedes-Benz Classic Centre, USA



W113 SL Pagoda undergoing a full restoration, with body blemishes sanded away.

“There are some standout models that I think will appeal to collectors in the years to come”

► reliance on diesel for the mid range cars, in favour of the petrol powered 124s, along with the introduction of the high displacement/high output 5.6-litre V8, and the 190E 2.3-16 Cosworth.

He and his colleagues enjoyed a little office fun as well, cobbling together internal corporate April Fools bulletins every year, covering such critical topics as mounting truck tyres to your 116-series, and likening the 123 to a grapefruit.

EXPANSION

The department assumed additional responsibility for dealer support to the point that it was rechristened ‘Dealer Services’ and handled everything from tools to diagnostic equipment and “everything except the four walls of the building.” Meanwhile, Mike had befriended MBUSA external relations legend Maryalice Ritzmann who sat in a cubicle opposite him in Montvale.

Since retired, Maryalice was responsible for communications with model specific clubs and interest groups, and many hours travelling to shows and events. She and Mike would exchange stories and ideas on a regular basis, and she made sure that Mike met the right people and got invited to the right events. And it was Maryalice, who encouraged Mike to pursue the role with Mercedes-Benz Classic in 2003.

A couple of years earlier, an internal discussion had started, focussing on Stateside parts support for older

Mercedes, similar to the discussion that took place within Mercedes-Benz Classic in Germany about 20 years prior.

Mike had met Classic Director Peter Spieth a number of times before the Classic Center job came up, and it was those moments and Mike’s knowledge and love of the cars that endeared him to his new boss. “They were looking for the same spark in the eye that I look for in candidates now – the look of someone who understands the brand, the cars, the heritage and the customers.”

What started as a few desks, a few phones, and an underground garage full of interesting vintage Mercedes in Montvale, New Jersey became a fully fledged sales, parts, advice, restoration, and service centre in Irvine, California in mid 2006 with Mike at the helm.

“The idea was a corporate owned and managed facility dedicated to customer care, brand maintenance, and preservation of the history of the company. The Classic Center is responsible for telling the Mercedes story, to service classic Mercedes forever, and to treat every owner the same whether they have a 300d or a 300D.”

Mike’s day-to-day activity now sees him spending a lot of time on the phone. “People want to talk about cars – their cars, our cars, cars they’d like to buy, and cars they’re about to buy.” He helps people find cars, he helps them research their cars, and he counsels them on prospective purchases.

“We know what to look for, and if things don’t smell just right, we want people to know. There are a lot of cars out there represented as one thing, but which are not what they appear to be. We help people sort through them.”

Looking forward, Mike sees young classics as the next phase in what Mercedes-Benz will define as ‘classic’. “The young classic genre is still developing, but there are some standout models that I think will appeal to



▲ The sheer scope of the Classic Center fleet is substantial.

collectors in the years to come. Take the 126-series SEC coupe – it’s one of the most perfectly proportioned cars, ever. Pristine 123 wagons have a strong following, but finding them is tough.

THE ONES TO WATCH

“Then you have the 124s – especially the Porsche collaboration 500E/E500 and the cabriolet, which was our first true factory, four-seat cabriolet since the 280SE – and we see where the values of those have gone!”

He also sees the 190E 2.3-16 as a natural classic. “It was a departure for us – performance in addition to the quality and over-engineering that makes a Mercedes a Mercedes.” Excellent ones are rare, and Mike thinks they will catch contemporaries like the E30 BMW M3.

“When it comes right down to it, nobody needs a classic or young classic Mercedes-Benz – the whole experience is passion driven and it is our job, our responsibility, and our pleasure to do everything we can to nurture that passion.” Mike’s passion, and that of the whole Classic Center, USA team is evident and contagious.

Now, which one of those young classics to hedge my bets on?

▼ As Classic Center manager, there are some perks to the job.



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◀ Schlessler (left) with Mass and Baldi pictured at Spa in 90.

◀◀ Team boss Peter Sauber recognised the potential of Merc's V8.

The road to Le Mans

With rare insight from the men that made it happen, we look back at one of Mercedes' greatest victories in motorsport

WORDS ROBB PRITCHARD IMAGES DAIMLER AG/SAUBER F1 TEAM

THE MERCEDES-BENZ NAME has been attached to race winning machines since the 19th century, but one of the most significant cars in the company's 121-year racing history is the C9 that won the Le Mans 24-hour race in 1989. And although the history books state that Mercedes-Benz has only won at Circuit de la Sarthe twice (the first time in 1952), the second victory marked one of the greatest comebacks in motorsport.

The glory days of the pre- and post-war Silver Arrows era came to an abrupt end in 1955 when Pierre Levegh's 300SLR left the track at Le Mans and ploughed into the main grandstand. Mercedes-Benz's withdrawal lasted a full generation, over 40 years before the German marque struck an engine deal with Peter Sauber, (owner of the Sauber Formula 1 team) and returned to the track.

If Peter Sauber had taken up his parents' offer to work in the family's electro-technical company that manufactured traffic lights, things would have been quite different. But his passion wasn't for controlling the flow of cars in the city, it was for making them go as fast as possible. When the novelty of modifying his Volkswagen Beetle wore off, he took over his

parents' basement and built a tubular framed, one-litre Ford Cosworth powered racer called the C1, which he promptly raced, winning the 1970 Swiss sports car championship. Some of you may not know that the letter 'C' of Sauber's cars represents the name of his wife, Christiane.

The C2 and C3 were built for customers to use in the Swiss sports car championship, and the single C4, which had an aluminium chassis, is as famous for its garish green paint scheme as much as its results. But it was the 1976 C5 that really put Sauber's name on the motorsport map, as driver Herbert Müller won that year's Interserie Championship and, as it was a 'Group 6' car, the team entered Le Mans. In both 1977 and 78, the cars were leading their class before retiring.

REVIVING THE STAR

There was a brief hiatus between the C5 and its numerical successor when Sauber prepared Lola F3 chassis, and developed the BMW M1 into an international race winning car. But what would culminate in the C9 had its roots back in the early 1980s, and Peter Sauber agreed to tell the story exclusively to *Mercedes Enthusiast*.

"The year 1982 was a serious return for us in the World Sportscar Championship when we ran the Ford Cosworth powered C6 and in 1983 the BMW powered C7. A working relationship I'd built up with three Mercedes engineers,

▲ The start of the 1989 Le Mans race – C9s chased by Jags.

“There were few sponsor logos on the car – mostly just Mercedes-Benz silver paint, so we knew we were part of history”

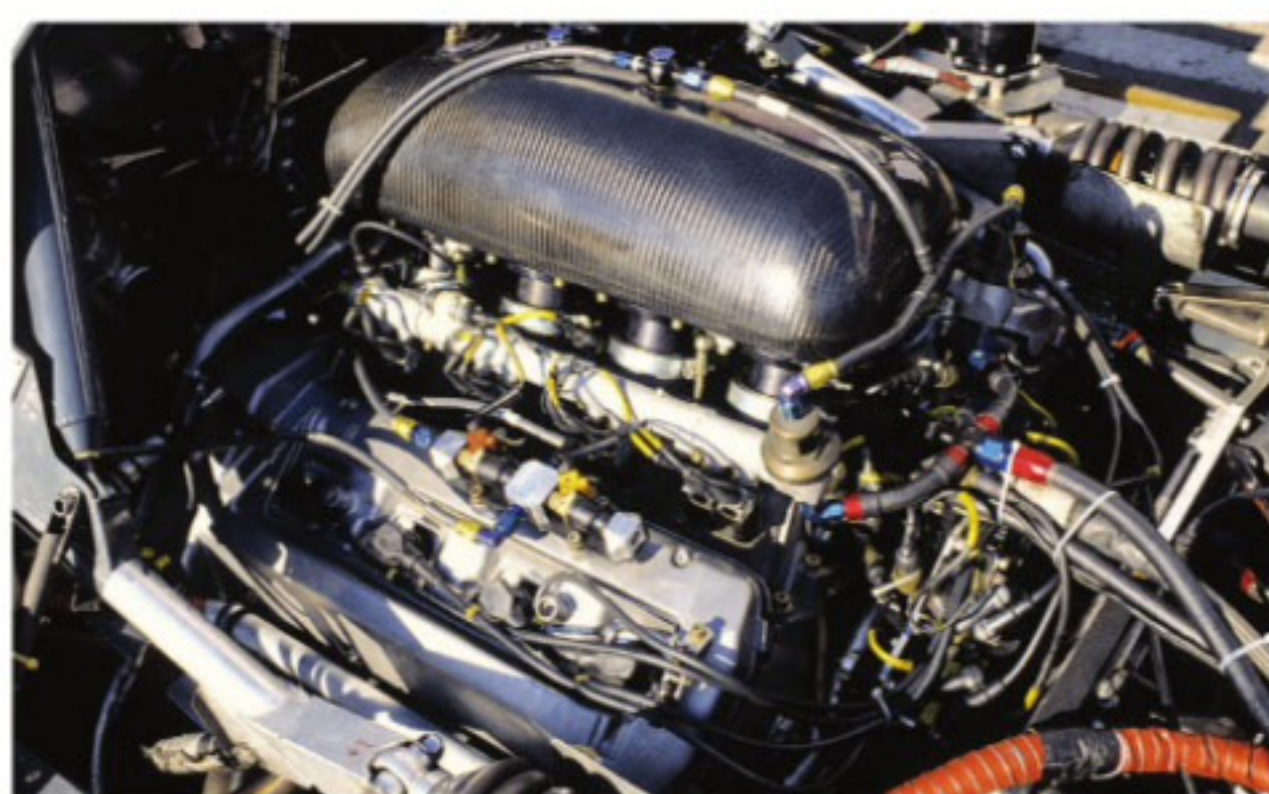


Rüdiger Faul, Leo Ress and Hans-Helmut Jülicher, meant that as an exception we were allowed to use the full scale wind tunnel in Untertürkheim. And this in turn brought me into contact with Dr Hermann Hiereth, head of engine development in the research department of Mercedes-Benz.

“His team had been responsible for the engines in the 1979 C111-IV world record project on the Nardò test circuit. I began thinking about how it would be possible to have a turbocharged, five-litre Mercedes engine in our Group C car. Not specifically to bring Mercedes back to international motorsport, but because it was a significantly more

► The C8 was the first Sauber to run with Mercedes-Benz power.





► powerful engine than the BMW motor in the C7. And so the C8 ran the M117 V8 engine, and the C9 [raced from 1987] used the upgraded M119 motor from 1989.”

Unusual for a sports car, the engine was basically identical to the five-litre road going version found in many Mercedes, apart from the addition of two KKK turbochargers that raised the power output from an autobahn friendly 240bhp to a Mulsanne straight conquering 720bhp in race trim, with up to 800bhp available for qualifying.

FULL BACKING

In the last races of the 1987 season, Mercedes’ top brass had seen the potential of the C9 and full factory support was offered for the following year. This is where Jean-Louis Schlesser joins the story. His first drive was by invitation at the 1987 Spa 1,000km, where he rewarded the team’s trust by getting the development car on pole in qualifying. But a week later, at the last round of the Supercup (a Group C championship held on West German race tracks), his win brought Mercedes-Benz motorsport into the modern era.

The year 1988 saw the Sauber-Mercedes team, in the striking, dark blue circuit board design of its main sponsor AEG, line up for the start of Le Mans – Mercedes’ first since its withdrawal in 1955. But the race effort had to be aborted because the tyres couldn’t cope with the massive speeds and downforce generated on the near four-mile long, pre chicane straight.

“The good year was 1989,” says Schlesser. “There were few sponsor logos on the car – mostly just Mercedes-Benz silver paint, so we knew we were part of history, and I was always in a good position, winning races, taking lap records and feeling very proud. It was like a big family, all of the mechanics were friends, and it was the same with Peter Sauber and my co-drivers.

“The C9 was a really nice car to race – it had a lot of power. But later, compared to the C11, I realised it was a bit rough. There was no power assisted

brakes, no power steering and you needed to drive like you had an egg on the gas pedal, especially in the wet, as the car had so much torque. It was very physical to drive, but I liked it so much.

“And then we did Le Mans. I got the pole lap, but what I’m really proud of is that down the Mulsanne straight, in the last year before organisers added the chicanes, I got the fastest ever speed of 407km/h [253mph]. OK, if you look at the record books, it says that the WM Peugeot is the fastest ever, but what that team did was b*****. That car could only go in a straight line, and with the air intakes taped off it was useless for the race. As we did it in a car that was in full race trim, for me it’s Mercedes that has the real speed record of Le Mans.

“At that pace, you can control the brakes and the steering, but you know if there’s a failure then you are beyond help, there is nothing you can do – you’ll be just a passenger. But I trusted the car and the engineering completely. Or maybe I was concentrating too much to feel any danger!”

▲ The C9 ran with different team names and paint finishes.

▲◀ The M117 V8 was used until 1989 when this M119 V8 took over.

▼ The C9 faced stiff opposition from Jaguar at Le Mans.

▼▼ Peter Sauber waves to the crowd after a historic win.



In the race, the defending champions Jaguar took an early lead while the Sauber-Mercedes ran strictly to a set pace, which soon started to play into their hands. The race engines were direct descendants of the ones developed by Dr Hiereth for reliability and economy, and two of the silver cars kept in touch with the leading Jaguar and Porsche into the early evening.

Several of the Jaguars experienced gearbox issues, and after leading all through the night the first placed XJR-9 crawled into the pits for some lengthy work and the number 61 and 63 C9s (driven by Jochen Mass and Mauro Baldi) were through to the front, trading the lead between them.

The order of the 1-2 was decided when Baldi spun out and needed to pit for a new nose, and then with just 90 minutes to go the gearbox got stuck in fifth. It was a tense ending, but the torque of the M119 V8 meant the car could manage slow corners. Schlesser’s car (number 62) finished fifth.

Despite a high profile in F1 during the last 20 years, Peter Sauber considers the win in Group C the highlight of his life at the race track. “For me, the 1989 Le Mans 1-2 is the greatest success in the 45-year history of our company.”

ENDING ON A HIGH

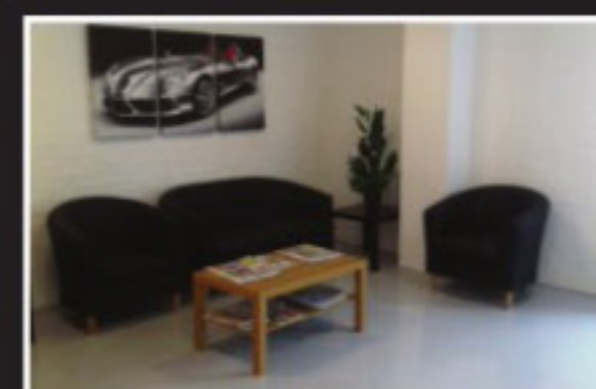
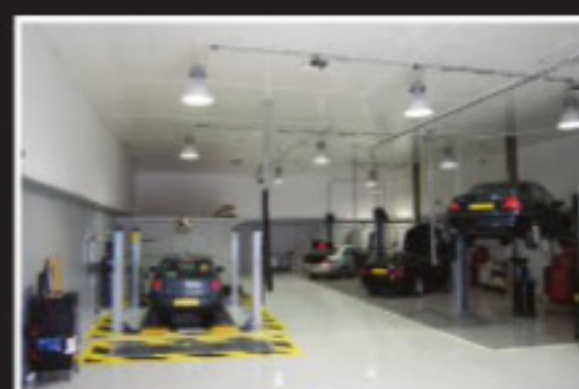
1989 was the C9’s year. As well as Le Mans, it dominated the World Sportscar Championship with seven wins out of the eight 480km (near 300-mile) races. Schlesser was at the wheel for five of those, in Japan, Spain, Germany, UK and Mexico, and with a second place finish in France and third at Brands Hatch in the UK, he took the championship convincingly.

The C9’s last race was the first round of the 1990 WSC, the Suzuka 480km, where it scored a 1-2 before being superseded by the slightly sleeker C11, which carried Schlesser to his second championship title. Fittingly, all six C9s built still exist today. Three are with Mercedes-Benz, one is in Sauber’s museum, and the other two examples reside in private collections.



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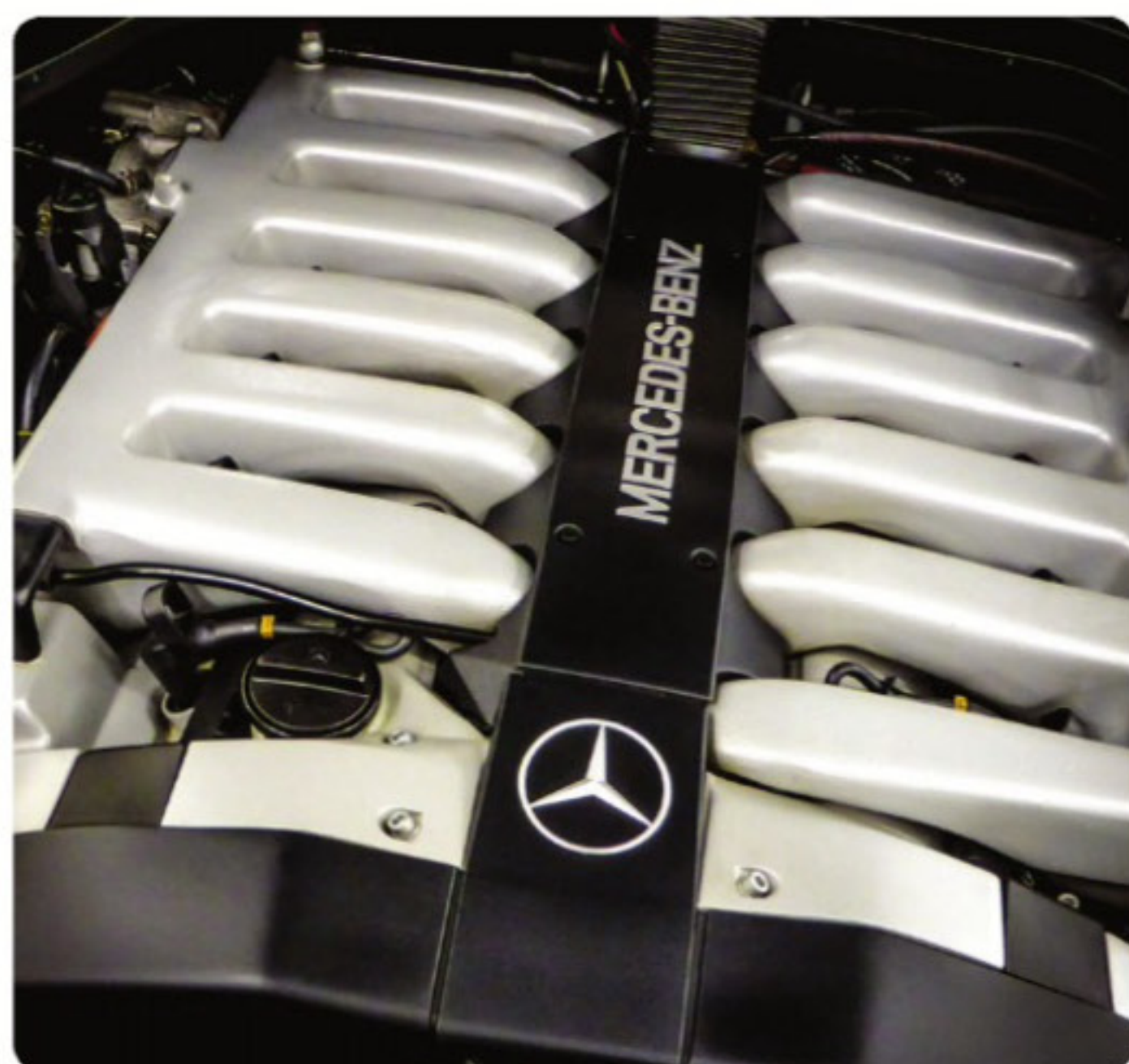
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◁ Effortless performance from the V12.

▽▽ The rear seats look barely used - if at all!

▽▽▽ Double glazing quietens the outside world.



◁ Just over 16,000 miles since 1992.

▽ This V12 goes without leather upholstery.



THE CLEAN DOZEN

With less than 17,000 miles on the clock, this spotless 600SEL V12 is even more impressive thanks to its rare Crystal Green metallic paintwork

WORDS AND IMAGES **ERIC RICHARDSON**

"IT CAME DOWN to a question of space," begins Ian Dunford. "I had space in the garage and felt an urge to fill it, and at that time a Mercedes-Benz for providing some enjoyment at weekends seemed like a good idea."

Given that, at just over 5.2 metres long, this 600SEL is one of Mercedes' longer creations of the last few decades, I ask Ian if he felt the need to *completely* fill the space in his garage? "I didn't set out to buy a 600," he replies with a smile. "I was actually looking for an R129 SL, but in the showroom alongside an R129 that I'd gone to see was this car. I was just drawn to it, and up to then I'd never considered buying a 140-series 600. But I succumbed to it, as the car was so nice and had such a low mileage." I can't say I blame him.

Taking ownership in October 2008, the car – then 16 years old – had covered a smidgeon over 12,000 miles. Sadly, the details of the first owner are a little sketchy, but Ian believes that the 600SEL was part of a fleet of cars and so received very little use, a fact confirmed by the history file which shows that the car covered under 700 miles in its first three years.

FLEET SPECIAL

Proof that there must be a balance struck between preserving a low mileage car and ensuring you don't end up with a car that is slowly deteriorating due to lack of use, was brought home to Ian when he gave the car a full inspection. The 140-series saloon was generally in rude health, however a couple of smaller matters required attention, as he explains.

"The soft closing doors and boot didn't work properly, and while that was only a minor issue I decided to have the problem rectified. Also, the folding wing mirrors had given up the ghost, probably due to lack of use, so I had new motors fitted to bring them back to life. The fact they had failed left the exposed to some damage, so I had the scratched covers attended to as well, but insisted the body shop remove them from the car for spraying to avoid any possibility of overspray on the bodywork."

While that may seem a particularly obsessive approach, one can fully understand Ian's concerns for preserving what is essentially factory fresh paintwork. Under threatening skies on the day of our photoshoot, the Crystal Green

metallic hue seemingly illuminates the gardens of Bradford's Cartwright Hall. Add the spotless velour interior and you have a car that exemplifies what the Mercedes-Benz S-Class stands for.

After seven years of ownership, I ask Ian if he is happy with what is now filling the space in his garage?

"Most certainly.

More modern cars have satellite navigation and other toys, but whenever I get into this car I don't feel like I'm missing out on anything. It

obviously has a lot of power, and I will occasionally put the throttle pedal to the floor – on a motorway slip road it just flies.

WANT FOR NOTHING

"However, I want to keep the car in good condition, so it lives in a heated garage during the winter, and whatever work needs doing

"This 600SEL covered under 700 miles during its first three years"

JUST THE FACTS



Mercedes-Benz 600SEL (V140)

ENGINE M120 5,987cc V12

POWER 402bhp@5,200rpm

TORQUE 428lb ft@3,800rpm

TRANSMISSION 4-speed auto, RWD

WEIGHT 2,190kg

0-62MPH 6.3sec

TOP SPEED 155mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 13.6mpg

YEARS PRODUCED 1991-1998

Figures for a pre September 1992 600SEL as pictured – cars built after that time had 389bhp/420lb ft torque and were known as the S600 long-wheelbase from June 1993; fuel consumption according to EEC urban; top speed electronically limited

gets done – although there hasn't been a lot of that so far. I have attended to the odd stone chip here and there, but I don't want to start messing around with it."

That is not to say the car doesn't get used. Ian enjoys summer trips away with his wife, and journeys to Mercedes-Benz Club events also offer a good excuse to get behind the wheel. "The car has covered a little over 16,700 miles now, which means an average of around 700 miles per year since I bought it. I think that's enough to keep everything functioning without spoiling things."

► Thank you to **Cartwright Hall** for the location Tel 01274 431212
Web www.bradfordmuseums.org



Over 5.2 metres long and weighing in at 2,190kg, but it will still hit 62mph in 6.3sec!

MONEY TALKS

Buyers are back on the streets and snapping up great deals on new and used Mercedes-Benz cars up and down the range

WORDS GUY BAKER IMAGES DAIMLER AG/TERRY OBORNE



Key used models like C-Classes have shown a reduction in days to sell

UK NEW CAR sales continue to flourish, with Mercedes-Benz especially showing a significant growth in market share compared to just one year ago. Increases in monthly and yearly sales have put rivals BMW and Audi in the shade. But with a market share hovering at around 5.5 per cent, this has increasingly come at the cost of reduced values of used Mercedes.

Of course, recent buyer distractions – like the general election and two May bank holidays – have had a notable impact on demand, putting extra pressure on residuals. But while

desirable or unusual models have remained generally popular, “Anything rather more ordinary, or requiring work has been harder to sell,” explains Rupert Pontin, Head of Valuations at Glass’s.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

“Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect that Mercedes-Benz is finding the used market increasingly challenging,” he reflects. “Used promotions on cars such as SLK have helped its dealer network keep stock moving, and increasing numbers of new products such as the CLA, GLA, and new C-Class should help this as we move forward.”

Glass’s ‘Radar’ scours the web and calculates the average days to sell for a product. For Mercedes-Benz, it shows that key used models have shown a reduction in days to sell, with C-Classes down from 43 to 41 days, M-Classes from 35 days to 30 days, and SLKs down to 38 days from 42.

Mercedes dealerships are really pushing the A-Class at the moment, with deals on both new and Approved Used examples. Just £269 a month will put you behind the wheel of a brand new manual A180 SE – although you’ll need a deposit of £2,699. The rate of this personal finance deal is 5.9 per cent APR over 36 months.

Fancy spending a bit less overall? Then there are currently hundreds of Approved Used A-Classes available too, with 9.9 per cent APR finance and a £500 dealer deposit contribution.

Look outside the main dealer network and, at the time of writing, some of the best deals were on C-Class saloons, with www.autoebid.com offering £2,739 off the RRP of a C200 SE, and up to £4,646 off the RRP of a C200 Bluetec SE. And while surfing the website www.uk-car-discount.co.uk, we noticed it was advertising £2,816 off the list price of a C250 Bluetec Sport Premium automatic.

Our best used buy this month...

E250 CDI (2009-2013)

The facelifted, 212-series E-Class saloon is now established in the used marketplace and that has softened values of early cars. None more so than the company car of choice for many fleet managers – the E250 CDI BlueEfficiency. Plentiful supply of ex fleet examples means you can now buy a

2009, 50,000-mile SE version for under £13,000 from an independent trader!

A typical specification includes that 201bhp/369lb ft turbodiesel motor with around 50mpg fuel economy, plus Bluetooth, climate control, heated front seats, Parktronic and Comand with satellite navigation, and almost all examples boast a full service history.



A 40,000-mile, 2010 Sport model will cost around £15,000, which is still good value. Meanwhile, the last, 2013 registered cars can be bought at main dealers for £20,000.

► Fancy a cheaper Mercedes-Benz four-door? Then check out our top three saloons for £8,000 on page 92!

FORECOURT FIND

CLS320 CDI
(C219)

Mercedes' swooping CLS is still a striking looking car, despite being over 10 years old. But you might be surprised at how cheap the sought after, V6 diesel version has become, despite 221bhp/398lb ft torque on tap and mid to high 30s fuel economy (NEDC combined).

Leggy private examples can go for less than £7,000, but you would be wise to stick to better maintained, lower mileage cars, like this well specced, 80,000-mile, 2008 CLS320 CDI we spotted at the Emerald Motor Company based in Hampshire.

Complete with a seven-speed 7G-Tronic automatic, fully stamped service history, both original remote keys and a big wad of old bills, receipts and previous MOTs, this coupe is in immaculate condition throughout. The asking price? Just £9,990.

► Emerald Motor Company
Tel 023 8055 0700/07940 703702
Web www.emeraldmotorcompany.com



▲ A shade under 10 grand buys this V6 coupe with 80K miles.

▷ Reputed three-litre V6 turbodiesel takes you to 62mph in 7.0sec.

▽ Seating for four adults and a handy 505-litre boot, too!



TOP TIPS

BUYING A CAR
AT AUCTION

Follow our auction tips and you could drive home in the Mercedes bargain of a lifetime

🕒 Find out what auctions are coming up at your local auction house, then browse the sale catalogues. Register online to receive texts and updates on suitable cars.

🕒 Always go along to watch an auction before taking part – preparation is key. On the day, arrive early and register, pick up the sale catalogue, inspect any potential buys and decide how much you want to spend. In addition to the hammer price, you'll have to pay a buyer's fee.

🕒 Check the windscreen of potential buys to see if the mileage is warranted, if there's a full service history, and/or an engineer's report. The safest buys are ex fleet cars with full service histories and warranted mileages.

🕒 Once the cars enter the ring, you'll only have a few seconds to decide whether to join in. Bid clearly, keep eye contact with the auctioneer and always stick to your budget as best as you can.

🕒 If you are successful, go straight to the rostrum and give the clerk a deposit (usually £500 or 20 per cent of the hammer price). Deposits must be paid in cash, or by Maestro or Visa Debit card.

🕒 Go to the office to pay the remaining balance, collect the keys and complete the paperwork. Don't forget the buyer's premium and administration fee. You can pay using a debit card, cash or a credit card. Remember to sort insurance and tax if you want to drive the car home!



AUCTION SPOTLIGHT

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

● C230 K Sports Coupe

2.3L, petrol, manual, 2002/02 plate, 72,000 miles, **£1,300**

● CLK320 Avantgarde Coupe

3.2L, petrol, auto, 2002/52 plate, 126,000 miles, **£1,975**

● A150 Avantgarde SE

1.5L, petrol, manual, 2006/06 plate, 64,000 miles, **£3,000**

● A160 BlueEfficiency Classic SE

1.5L, petrol, manual, 2012/12 plate, 17,000 miles, **£6,700**

● SL500

5.0L, petrol, auto, 2004/04 plate, 59,000 miles, **£8,400**

● C180 Kompressor BE Elegance

1.6L, petrol, auto, 2009/09 plate, 39,000 miles, **£9,300**

● CLK280 Cabriolet Sport

3.0L, petrol, auto, 2009/09 plate, 66,000 miles, **£9,300**

● S320 CDI L

3.0L, diesel, auto, 2008/57 plate, 114,000 miles, **£9,300**

● E220 CDI BlueEfficiency Estate

SE 2.1L, diesel, auto, 2011/11 plate, 122,000 miles, **£10,500**

● GL320 CDI

3.0L, diesel, auto, 2006/56 plate, 105,000 miles, **£13,000**

● C200 CDI BlueEfficiency SE

2.1L, diesel, auto, 2012/12 plate, 12,000 miles, **£13,800**

● C250 CDI BE Coupe AMG Sport

2.1L, diesel, auto, 2012/12 plate, 48,000 miles, **£15,467**

● E250 CDI BE Avantgarde

2.1L, diesel, auto, 2012/12 plate, 30,000 miles, **£16,000**

● E350 CDI BlueEfficiency Sport

3.0L, diesel, auto, 2012/12 plate, 48,000 miles, **£17,175**

● C63 AMG Estate

6.2L, petrol, auto, 2012/12 plate, 37,000 miles, **£28,400**

AND REMEMBER...

Arrive early, pick up the auction catalogue and examine the vehicles 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 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 £8,000 SALOONS

Mercedes-Benz is rightly famous for its executive saloons – a favourite with both company and private buyers alike. Practical and attractive, as long as they have been cared for and serviced on time they make excellent used buys. And you don't need to break the bank to own

one, with these three cars all great choices for just £8,000. Cherry picked from the C-Class, E-Class and S-Class line ups, each saloon here looks upper class, delivers a silky drive, and won't hurt your wallet at the refuelling station. Amazing, given their current value.



C180 KOMPRESSOR SE (W204)

Eight grand will buy a 50,000-mile, 2007 or 2008 C180 Kompressor with a full service history. Some examples of this age have only ever been serviced at main dealers and a typical specification includes climate control, 16-inch alloys, a CD player, Bluetooth, electric front seats and tinted windows. Despite a 154bhp, supercharged petrol engine, the combined economy is almost 40mpg, whilst annual road tax is currently £225.



E320 CDI SPORT (W211)

The original, great all-rounder, the E320 CDI tops out at 155mph yet achieves 37mpg on the combined cycle – and all in sporting comfort. Xenon lights, leather upholstery, Bluetooth, Parktronic, climate control, 17-inch alloy wheels and a CD player as standard. Just £8,000 bags a 56,000-mile car from 2005 with a pristine service record. That's remarkable value given the V6 turbodiesel's 221bhp and 376lb ft torque on tap.



S320 CDI (W221)

The ultimate in one-upmanship, a 2006 or 2007 S-Class parked on your driveway is guaranteed to make neighbours jealous. Yet in sensible S320 CDI form, the fuel bills won't prevent you enjoy a luxurious lifestyle, this 231bhp limousine capable of around 33mpg (NEDC combined). And although the clock may show over 100,000 miles, a full Mercedes-Benz service history (which most cars have) should ease any concerns.

PRODUCTS LOOK & LISTEN

FOLIATEC EXHAUST PIPE SPRAY PAINT

Fancy changing the look of your old Mercedes exhaust without the fuss and expense of buying a new back box? Then simply paint your exhaust instead. Sounds tricky, but it doesn't have to be if



you use Foliatic's new exhaust pipe spray. The company's Exhaust Pipe 2C Spray Paint includes both paint and hardener in the can, so just select the desired colour, pierce the cartridge and away you go.

Available in silver or black, the heat resistant paint permanently seals and preserves the surface so rust and oil will not be able to do any harm to the surface. It costs just £24.99 from www.foliatic.co.uk.

BD CLEAN PRODUCTS

Birmingham based company BD Clean has just launched its new car cleaning and detailing products website – see www.bdclean.co.uk. Specialising in car maintenance, BD Clean provides everything a car owner needs to clean and detail their vehicle to make it look 'showroom ready'.

BD Clean has an established reputation in the industry and its range of own-brand products is extensive, covering the entire cleaning and detailing process. Its range even includes products specially designed for use on delicate matte wrapped vehicles.



CONNECTS2 DOUBLE DIN STEREO FITTING KIT FOR W204 C-CLASS

If you want to install a double DIN aftermarket stereo into your W204 Mercedes C-Class, then the £149.99 CTKMB14 offers an ideal solution, combining cutting edge design with impressive functionality. The kit contains two bespoke fascia panels, one to house a double DIN stereo and one for the Comand

infotainment screen, a CAN-Bus SWC interface to retain steering wheel control functionality, an antenna adapter and dedicated OEM aux and USB retention cables. For more information, visit www.connects2.com.



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“A US launch in 2002 strengthened the G-Wagen’s prospects, and in 2010 Mercedes-Benz UK revived right-hand drive imports”



A RARE **BREED**

Can Mercedes’ legendary off-road machine make a great used purchase in the second decade of the 21st century? Read on to find out...

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

THERE ARE many fascinating aspects of the Mercedes-Benz G-Wagen, but surely the most remarkable of all is that it’s still with us 36 years after its launch, and with the same body and chassis it started with.

Designed as a military vehicle but with civilian pretensions, the *Geländewagen*, or ‘land car’ missed the spot at a time when every new Mercedes-Benz model generated fawning headlines and long waiting lists. Mercedes-Benz dealerships, used to effortless order taking,

probably did not want it, and in the UK it was dead in the water by the mid 1980s, reduced to special order status, although it remained an official Mercedes-Benz model until 1996 (it had been renamed G-Class two years earlier), when imports ceased altogether.

But then something happened, and the G-Class, production of which had continued in small numbers at Magna Steyr in Graz, Austria, became fashionable. Its square body and flat metal and glass panels were cool, the antidote to the anonymity of the modern SUV, its tough build quality a

direct link with the hewn-from-granite Mercedes of the past. A US launch in 2002 strengthened its prospects, and in 2010 Mercedes-Benz UK revived right-hand drive imports, the UK line up the G350 CDI with a three-litre V6 diesel and the G55 AMG Kompressor using a 5.5-litre supercharged V8.

As the Mercedes-Benz G-Wagen was not imported to the UK for many years, a certain amount of mystery surrounds it, certainly in this part of the world. So what is available and, given the age of most around, can an older G-Wagen really be a sensible purchase?

DESIGN, EVOLUTION

In 36 years, there have been many changes to the G-Wagen, but three distinct phases. The first generation was the 460-series, built by Mercedes’ truck division and feeling it. The engine line up comprised a 2.3-litre four-cylinder petrol (230GE), a 2.8-litre six-cylinder petrol (280GE) and a three-litre, five-cylinder diesel (300GD), all offered as a short-wheelbase three-door, or long-wheelbase five-door.

The selectable four-wheel drive transmission was the best of its day, featuring independently

SPOTTED
FOR SALE
PRIVATE SALE

G400 CDI
2004, LHD, silver, black
leather, 96,300 miles, sat
nav, 18-inch wheels,
£25,000, London



The silver car is a 460-series G-Wagen, the black and blue examples opposite 463-series.

lockable front, centre and rear differentials, which even the Range Rover didn't have. In 1985, the G-Wagen was transferred to Mercedes' car division, after which the equipment and trim improved.

In 1989, the 463-series was launched, bringing coloured coded exterior trim and more integrated bumpers, while the cabin now sported a car like instrument panel to replace the original basic instrument pod, plus a new steering wheel, more pleasing switchgear, and wood cappings for the fascia and centre console.

Four-wheel drive became permanent, the differential lock engagement changed from pull up levers on the transmission tunnel to three switches on the fascia, while anti lock brakes were fitted. As before, SWB and LWB versions were offered, but although a wide range of 463s were built, including a cabriolet, just four were officially available in the UK, the SWB/

LWB petrol 300GES/GEL and diesel 300GDS/GDL, both now using three-litre sixes. 460-series cars became 461s and continued for the time being as a utility spec vehicle retaining selectable 4WD.

The third incarnation came in autumn 2000 when, in the G-Wagen's 21st year, a much revised 463-series was launched. The interior was refreshed again and became more luxurious, the G-Class now available with premium extras such as Comand, while turbodiesels included the much praised, 413lb ft torque four-litre V8 (G400 CDI) and later, the three-litre V6 (G320 CDI). AMG got in on the act with the 5.4-litre V8 G55, good for 349bhp/387lb ft, although many reckon the best G-Class of all is the five-litre G500 V8. Since then, the G-Class has benefited from various revisions, not least a seven-speed automatic, and in 2006 was updated once again.

WHAT YOU'LL PAY

Aside from 2010-on stock, much of which is priced into six figures or close to it, affordable vehicles – let's call that under £30,000 – are from the late 1980s and 1990s, plus a few left-hand drive Gs from later on, and a tiny number right-hand drive examples from the early 2000s.

The resurrection of the G-Class in the UK has pushed up prices of early models – whereas a few years ago they could be picked up for £3,000 – so £6,000 to £7,000, and more likely nearer £10,000, is a more common starting point.

This will buy an original 460 G-Wagen from the late 1980s, but given that its appearance never changed much, condition is far more important than age, hence you could see the same model in good shape and with a solid history for £20,000.

The vastly more spacious and practical LWB G-Wagens sell for

JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz 230GE SWB/LWB (460)

ENGINE M102 2,299cc 4-cyl
POWER 123bhp@5,000rpm
TORQUE 142lb ft@4,000rpm
TRANSMISSION 4-speed manual, 4WD
WEIGHT 1,880/2,000kg
0-62MPH Na
TOP SPEED 94mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 16.6/16.4mpg
YEARS PRODUCED 1982-1991

Mercedes-Benz 280GE SWB/LWB (460)

ENGINE M110 2,746cc 6-cyl
POWER 154bhp@5,250rpm
TORQUE 167lb ft@4,250rpm
TRANSMISSION 4-speed manual, 4WD
WEIGHT 1,945/2,065kg
0-62MPH Na
TOP SPEED 98mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 13.1mpg
YEARS PRODUCED 1979-1991

Mercedes-Benz G320 SWB/LWB (463)

ENGINE M104 3,199cc 6-cyl
POWER 207bhp@5,500rpm
TORQUE 221lb ft@3,750rpm
TRANSMISSION 4-speed auto, 4WD
WEIGHT 2,215/2,320kg
0-62MPH 12.5/12.8sec
TOP SPEED 106mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 17.0/16.7mpg
YEARS PRODUCED 1994-1997

Mercedes-Benz G500 SWB/LWB (463)

ENGINE M113 4,966cc V8
POWER 292bhp@5,500rpm
TORQUE 336lb ft@2,800-4,000rpm
TRANSMISSION 5-speed auto, 4WD
WEIGHT 2,365/2,460kg
0-62MPH 9.7/10.2sec
TOP SPEED 118mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 16.9mpg
YEARS PRODUCED 1998-2012

Mercedes-Benz 300GD SWB/LWB (463)

ENGINE OM603 2,996cc 6-cyl
POWER 111bhp@4,600rpm
TORQUE 141lb ft@2,700-2,900rpm
TRANSMISSION 5-speed manual, 4WD
WEIGHT 2,090/2,225kg
0-62MPH Na
TOP SPEED 88mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 19.2/18.8mpg
YEARS PRODUCED 1990-1994

Figures are representative of the G-Wagen range – the G500 received a 5.5-litre V8 with 383bhp from 2012, and the 300GD was known as the G300 Diesel from September 1993; fuel consumption for the 230GE, 280GE, G320 and 300GD according to EEC urban, and for the G500 according to NEDC combined; off-road top speeds differ to those shown

higher prices than SWBs. Our maximum budget of £30,000 buys a late 1990s 300GEL with a high spec, or with luck a G500.

For this price you may see one of two cars with modifications by Brabus, such as wheels, body addenda and nudge bars. ➤

G-Wagens **INSIDE AND OUT**

POWERTRAIN

Here, we'll concentrate on the M102 four-cylinder unit in the 1986-on 230GE, the M110 six-cylinder in the 280GE, and the OM617 five-cylinder diesel in the 300GD, as these power the majority of vehicles in the UK.

The M102 four-cylinder is the one most likely to suffer a blown cylinder head gasket, and James Lafferty of G:Wagen near Mapledurham in Berkshire has this advice: "The sign is overheating, so the water temperature is quite important. You can tell a lot about a Mercedes-Benz from its water temperature." Sound advice.

However, at high mileage, the engine needing the most careful inspection is the M110, which can become fragile after 150,000 miles, the cold start system possibly not working properly, and the valves and seals in the fuel injection wearing out. This could result in 12 to 13mpg rather than 18mpg it would give at its best.

The five-cylinder diesel lives up to its reputation for reliability - provided it doesn't have an aftermarket turbo on it, a common conversion. The naturally aspirated engine does not have the strengths of the factory

turbodiesel engine, we understand. "It was a pointless conversion - you didn't really notice the difference. We tend to steer clear of them," says James.

The transmission, four-/five-speed manual or four-speed automatic, is battleship grade durable. However, the diff locks can seize through lack of use - previous owners may never have tried them - and might be freed up by lubrication but may be suffering something more serious such as a faulty activator. But if you don't ever lock the diffs, there's no pressing need to do anything about it.

Clockwise from far left: Turbo conversions are quite common on diesel Gs; the petrol 320 straight-six feels powerful enough in this application but doesn't have the economy of the diesels; M110 unit suffers wear at high miles; lever for low ratio transfer behind the auto's gearlever.



SUSPENSION, STEERING AND BRAKES

The steering is Mercedes' recirculating ball system. Hence there will always be free play around the straight ahead position, but the vagueness can be exacerbated by worn links in the suspension and also some free play in the universal joints in the steering column itself.

A worn steering box will be an MOT failure, but because a new one is around £2,000, it might be better to overhaul it for half that amount. What you can feel through the steering is important. "A very specific vibration at 60mph is due to a worn steering damper," says James.

The coil suspension springs are prone to sagging, especially those at the rear. Check the vehicle's ride height when it is on a flat surface - the back should be at least as high as the front. "The rear springs fail, particularly on cars used in London where there are a lot of speed bumps," James explains.

However, a lopsided G can be due to a more serious problem. "Shock absorber mountings snap off at the mounting point, leaving the vehicle sitting down at one side. You'll hear a clunking sound on the move."

Pulling to one side when the brakes are applied usually means a sticking front brake caliper, while a faulty rear brake bias sensor (mounted on the chassis, at the rear) can stop sufficient braking power being sent to the rear, which is another MOT failure.



From top: SWB G's give up around 450mm in length when compared to LWB cars; snapped coil road springs can affect the ride height, so check this.

SPOTTED
FOR SALE
USED CAR DEALER

G300
1994, RHD, black, cloth
interior, 83,000 miles, full
Mercedes-Benz service
history, £19,990,
Wimbledon



Left to right: Brilliantly square, the G-Wagen has its own appeal; corrosion can be an issue on these earlier Gs; alloys became standard.

Vehicles built prior to the 2000s have less electronics to go wrong

BODYWORK AND WHEELS

Unlike the Range Rover it rivalled, Mercedes' G-Wagen has no aluminium bodywork, so any you look at from the 1980s or 1990s will probably have panel corrosion. "It's the main thing on G-Wagens," James observes. The early, 460-series models rusted badly at the back of the body, behind the rear wheelarches, as those vehicles did not have plastic wheelarch liners to keep dirt out. The bottom of the side-hinged tailgate crumbles too.

The front wings and side sills also rust, as do the spot welds that hold body panels together. "Water

will permeate the body seams and stay there," James warns. Rust can affect the windscreen surround and spread behind the dashboard, too.

Early cars had steel wheels, and later alloy wheels were fitted as standard, but you'll see Gs with aftermarket wheels, possibly with off-road tyres. The standard five-spoke wheels, with normal tyres are what you want to see, and without kerbing or corrosion. You may come across 460 models with later, 463-series body fixings such as the grille, headlamp surrounds and door mirrors.



INTERIOR AND ELECTRICS

The original 'soldier proof' G-Wagen interior was hardly easy on the eye, but it's reckoned to wear better, and despite the plusher looking interior of later models, the seats on older Gs are equally comfortable and there is more room in the cabin.

One common stress point is the outside bolster cushion on the driver's seat base, which rips and tears away as a result of countless entries and exists. "We can re-pad and re-stitch one for about £200," says James. Other common issues are a failed heater blower (an eight-hour job to fix), and the driver's door pull coming adrift.

Vehicles built prior to the 2000s have less electronics to go wrong, but the three switches for the diff locks can fail. This is the possibly most complicated part of the car, being a vacuum hydraulic system linked to the ABS.



Clockwise from top left: You feel on top of the world when driving a G-Wagen (note the diff buttons in the centre of dash on this later car); obvious differences between the dials of the 463s and earlier 460s (bottom); foldable rear bench boosts boot space; fabric trim common.

G-Wagens **INSIDE AND OUT**

VERDICT

A G-Wagen is not an easy purchase. They are old, not particularly numerous, and expensive when you do find them, and many will require a lot of work. But the G is a unique Mercedes-Benz institution, one whose appeal and image mature by the year, and if not quite a classic in the traditional sense, will at least hold its price well.

Oh, and one more thing – you may not know the G-Wagen is a massively talented off-road vehicle. If you are prepared to take one on, and all the commitments that ownership demands, we don't think you'll be disappointed.



UK imports

Although the evolution of the G-Wagen since the mid 1990s is largely irrelevant to the UK market, some vehicles did arrive on these shores during the 'gap years', mainly left-hand drive imports. The most popular diesel import was the G400 CDI, while the G270 CDI was less favoured because it was seen as underpowered.

Despite the G-Wagen's absence from UK price lists, in the late 1990s Mercedes-Benz quietly slipped in a batch of right-hand drive G500s, the total believed to be 50, advertised for sale through a specialist London dealer. At around this time, AMG offered a right-hand drive conversion; a few vehicles have been converted independently, but the cost and difficulty limited the numbers.



**SPOTTED
FOR SALE**
SPECIALIST DEALER
230GE SWB
1985/B, RHD, metallic grey,
tan MB-Tex, 80,000
miles, £13,995,
Birmingham

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

MODEL	OIL SERVICE	MAJOR SERVICE*
230GE/280GE	£325	£850

*Quotes from G-Class, Worcestershire; major service includes various filters and transmission fluid change

Recalls and non routine servicing costs

There have been five recalls on the G-Class, relating to a loss of engine power, faulty differential switches, fuel leaks, and a faulty passenger airbag (numbers R/2005/126, R/2010/178, R/2008/149, R/2011/172, R/2012/110)

- ★ **Replace front brake discs and brake pads** £300
- ★ **Replace cylinder head gasket on 230GE** £1,200
- ★ **Fit a reconditioned fuel tank** £500
- ★ **Replace rear road springs** £550
- ★ **Rebuild the steering box** £1,000
- ★ **Four premium brand, 16-inch tyres (205R16 M+S)** £280

Buyer's checks

- ✓ **Cylinder head gasket leak on four-cylinder 230GE**
- ✓ **Cold start system can give issues on the 2.8-litre M110 engine, ruining performance and economy**
- ✓ **Lockable transmission differentials can seize up due to lack of use – engage to check they work**
- ✓ **Coil road springs can break, so ensure the G is on flat ground when you check it has an even ride height**
- ✓ **Excessive play in the steering indicates a new or reconditioned steering box is required**
- ✓ **Front brake calipers can stick the brake pad to the wheel, causing the vehicle to pull to one side**
- ✓ **Corrosion attacks all parts of the G-Wagen's steel body, and especially under the floor behind the rear wheelarches, so check the vehicle thoroughly**
- ✓ **The dashboard electric differential switches on post 1991 models can cease to work properly**

What you'll pay

- £4,000-£5,000** Now the base price for the oldest, roughest 460 G-Wagens, early to mid 1980s 230GE, 280GE and 300GD; lots of rust and other problems
- £5,000-£10,000** 1985 to 1990 230/280GE and 300GD 460s, RHD, solid but well over 100,000 miles
- £10,000-£20,000** 'Gap years' mean a limited selection at this price, but a well preserved 460-series with high spec, and maybe an early 463-series 300GEL with six-figure mileage
- £20,000-£30,000** First of the 463-series G500s in LHD, or early 2000s G270 CDI; Brabus modified cars
- £30,000-£40,000** Mid 2000s G55 Kompressor in LHD, possibly a rare, right-hand drive G500

► Thank you to **G-Wagen** in Berkshire for the loan of the cars, the location, and for technical advice Tel 01189 721100 Web www.g-wagen.co.uk



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SHOW STOPPERS

Our V8 wagon falls into limp home mode, but a silver lining is provided by cost effective brake upgrades and a transmission fluid change

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

FACTSHEET

CAR 2004 S203 C55 AMG Estate

OWNER Mercedes Enthusiast

LOCATION London, UK

PURCHASED July 2014

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Over £1,500 spent on new ESP control module, new washer fluid sensor, new gearbox oil and filter, and upgraded brakes



“Not only did the speedometer drop to 0mph, ABS and ESP malfunction messages flashed in the instrument cluster”

FIRST, THE GOOD news. Following March's successful outing at Silverstone racing circuit (see *Mercedes Enthusiast* May 2015), there came the desire to do something about the C55's brakes – more specifically, the standard brake pads, which offer adequate retardation during normal road use, but leave something to be desired when you're really hustling the car. Once you get into the final third of the brake pedal's travel, there really isn't the bite that you expect, and this becomes more pronounced after several big stops from high speeds.

So off to Hampshire we went, to the workshop of Prestige Car Service,

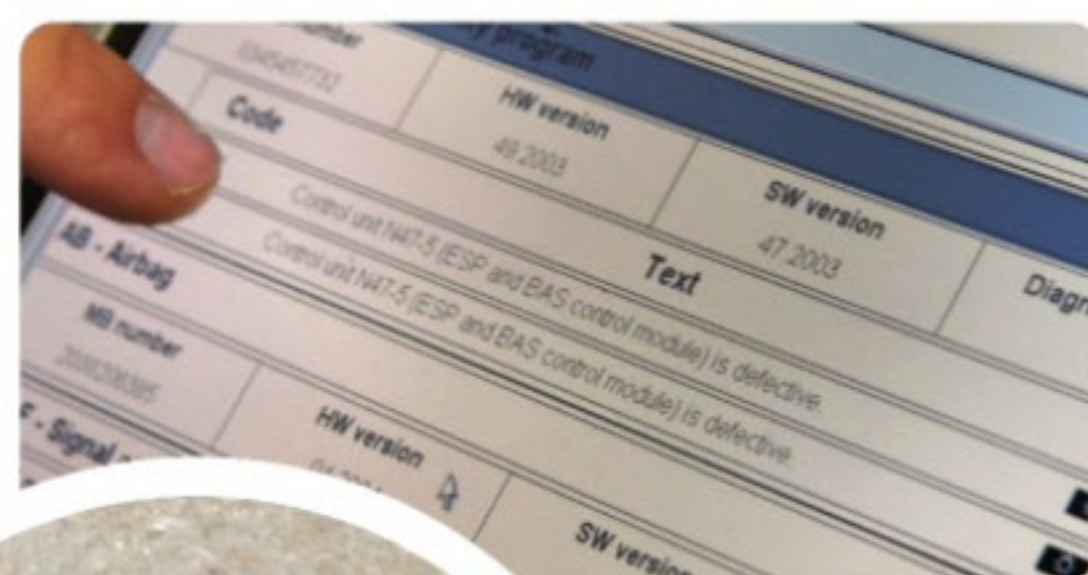
where our AMG wagon was graced with Tarox 112 Strada performance pads up front, plus stainless steel brake hoses all round, which are made by Hel and don't expand under continuous heavy braking, meaning improved consistency

and more feel. Topping things off was Mercedes' own DOT 4 Plus brake fluid, which has a higher boiling point than DOT 4 and makes it ideal for track use.

As I write this, the pads are only just bedded in, a period which lasts between



▷ Washer fluid level sensor accessed through wheelarch.



100 and 200 miles. But the difference in stopping power is already apparent. As before, the initial bite is soft and progressive, which is suited to town driving. But press the pedal harder and there is a much more aggressive braking effect than before, with decent feel throughout. Perfect.

The Tarox 112 Strada front pads cost £130, the Hel stainless steel brake hoses £80, and the Mercedes DOT 4 Plus brake fluid £14 per one litre bottle (all prices include VAT but not labour). I contacted our insurer prior to the work and was told our premium would be unaffected. Money well spent, I'd say.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH

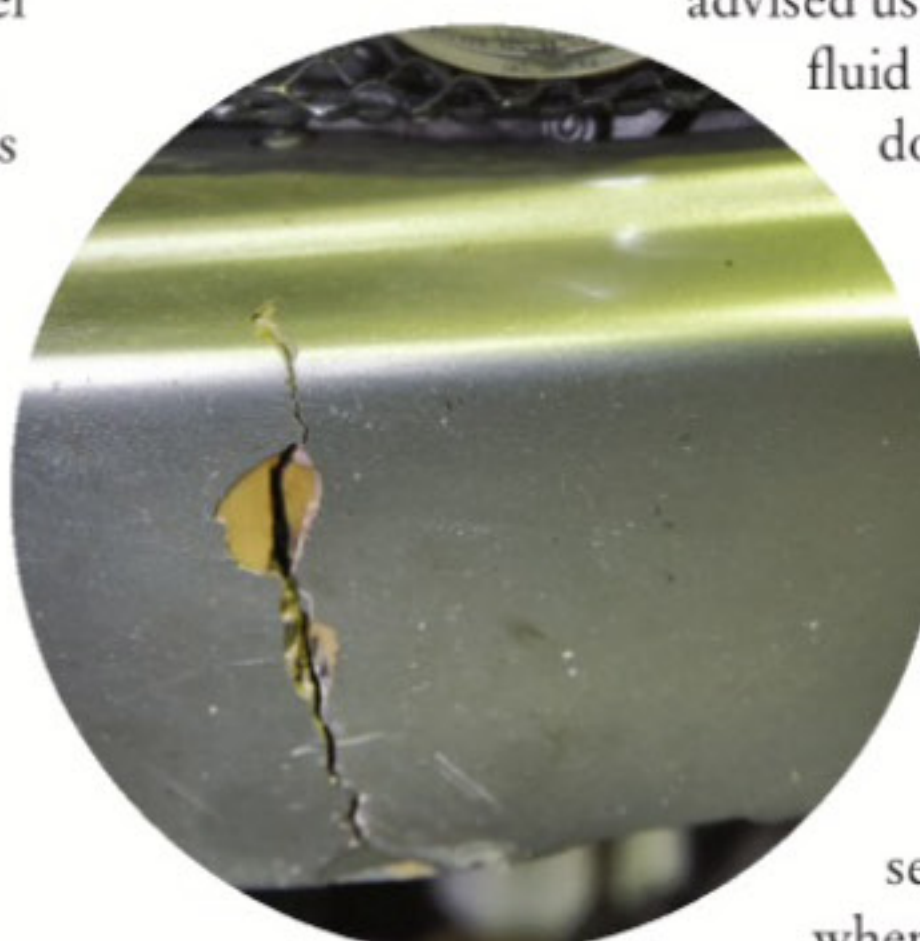
But now comes the bad news. Another reason for visiting PCS was to diagnose a rather alarming problem which sent the C55 into limp home mode at 70mph on the M25 motorway one Tuesday afternoon in May, with colleague Graham Black, Editor of sister title *Earthmovers*, at the wheel.

Not only did the speedometer drop to 0mph, ABS and ESP malfunction messages flashed in the instrument cluster, and the gearbox selected a ratio much, much lower than fifth.

With engine revs sky high but the needle *not* bouncing off the limiter, Graham hastily pulled onto the hard shoulder and cycled the ignition, which seemingly cured the problem. However, with a long journey ahead and trust in the C55 completely gone, he wisely chose to return the car to the office.

The same issue struck myself on the night prior to our date with PCS, but this time I also saw a brake pad wear warning, which wasn't too surprising,

△ New ESP control module fitted after diagnostic machine flagged up an error; the symptoms were pretty concerning!



△ Crack in front bumper seems to be getting worse.

and vindicated my decision to get new pads fitted the next day.

Cutting a long story short, the diagnostic machine flagged up an issue with the ESP control module, which is located under the bonnet, right of the V8 as you look at it.

Armed with some knowledge about this rare problem, I was aware that this was very bad news indeed.

The only solution, according to the diagnostic machine, was a new module at £862. Add 30 minutes of labour and VAT on top of that and I was facing a difficult phone call with the powers that be.

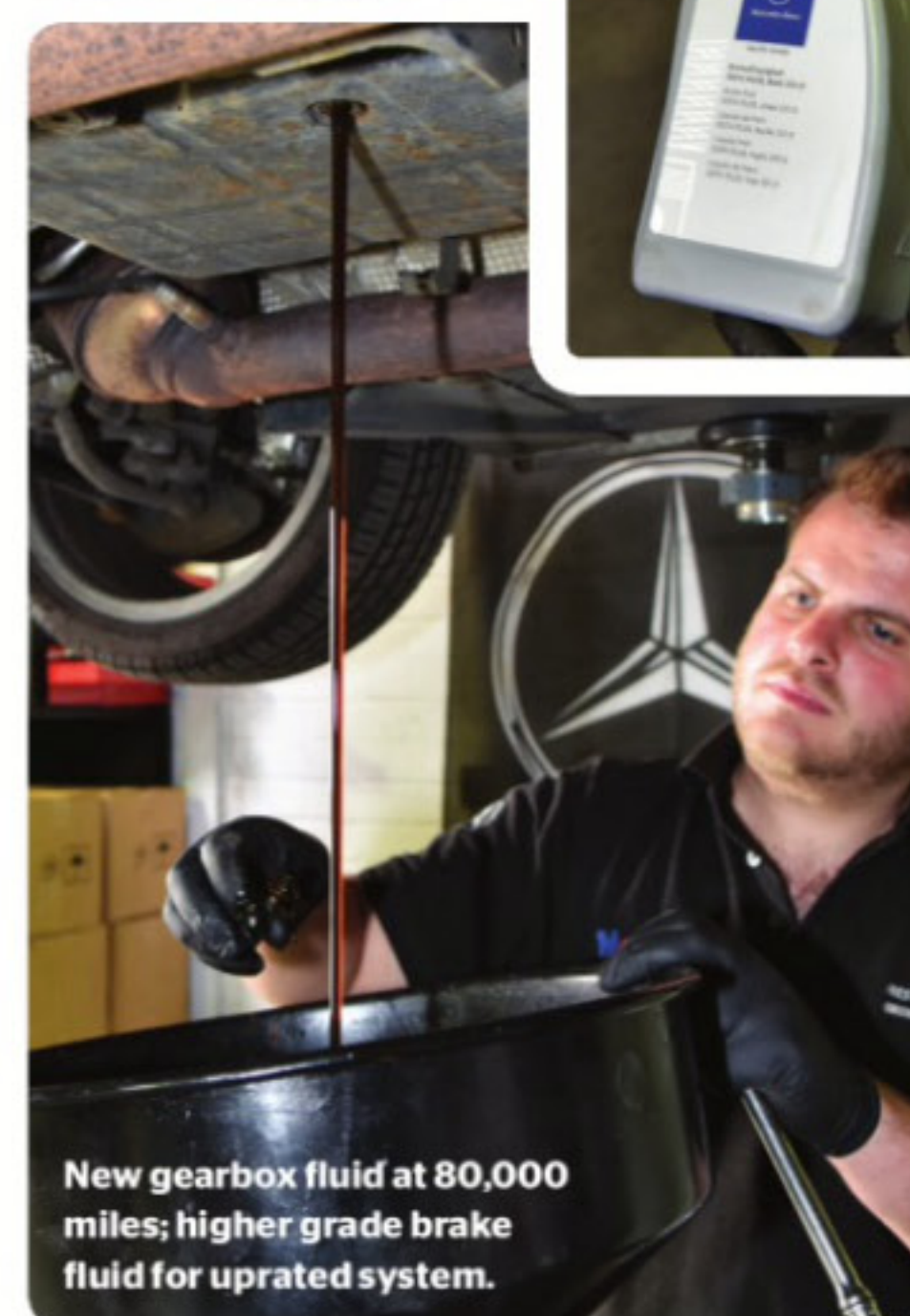
On the same day, and given that our C55 has now passed 81,000 miles, PCS advised us to change the transmission fluid and filter, which should be done every 40,000 miles in its book. The C55 was also

treated to a new washer fluid level sensor (£12 for the part), to solve another malfunction message which didn't go away after I'd fitted a new coolant level sensor in February.

It turns out that both sensors are in the same loop, so when one fails both are flagged up in the instrument cluster display, but you don't know which sensor has died until you try fitting a new one. The coolant level sensor is easily accessed below the bottle and can be changed in

minutes, but the washer fluid level sensor is rooted behind the nearside front wheelarch lining, which must be removed to access it.

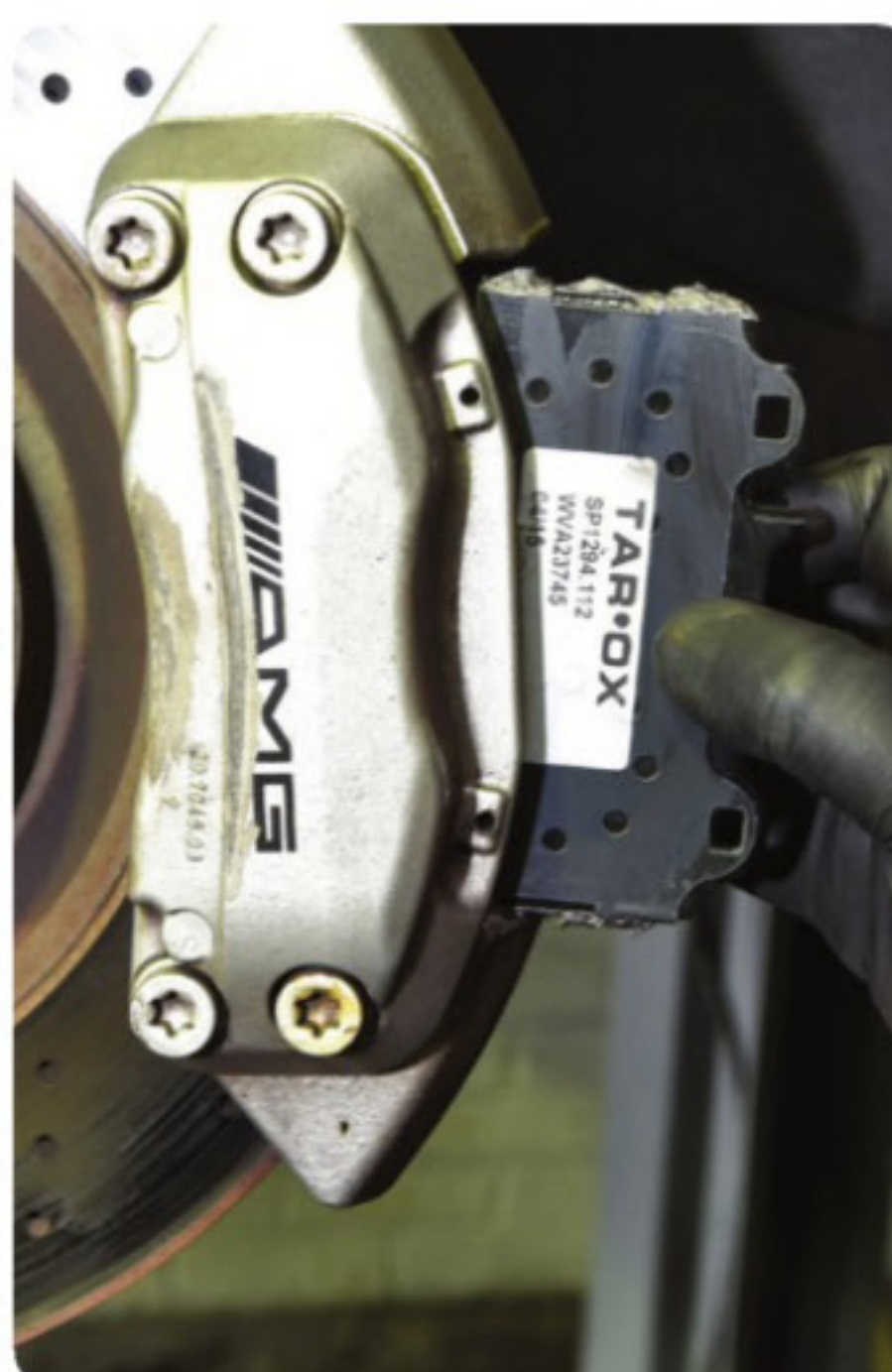
It's been a pricey few weeks then, but at least I can say the



New gearbox fluid at 80,000 miles; higher grade brake fluid for uprated system.

C55's attributes have improved. The next job is sorting an unsightly crack in the front bumper, which occurred some time before we purchased the car and was temporarily covered by a low quality filler and repaint job.

► Do you know a reliable plastic welder in Kent or Surrey? If so, contact us via Email info@mercedesenthusiast.co.uk



► Tarox 112 Strada front pads cost £130 and offer a stronger bite than the standard items; Hel stainless steel brake hoses fitted.





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MIDNIGHT OIL

The desire to cure an insufferable itch leads our American contributor to buy a Mercedes diesel from the much admired modern classic era

WORDS AND IMAGES **REED HITCHCOCK**

FACTSHEET

CARS 2011 S212 E350 4Matic Estate/
1985 W126 300SD Turbodiesel

OWNER Reed Hitchcock

LOCATION Virginia, USA

PURCHASED May 2014/April 2014

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT E-Class due an inspection and clean; 126-series diesel joins the fold



“I have a very soft spot for the OM617 inline-five diesel”

THE PROBLEM WITH late model Mercs like our S212 E350 4Matic Estate is that they just work.

Seriously – from an ownership perspective that’s fantastic, but as a writer it makes my job a little challenging. To update on the wagon: it’s running great, I’m taking it in tomorrow for an A3 service and Virginia safety inspection (our version of an MOT), and I’m expecting everything to go like clockwork.

Beyond that, it needs a good clean, the result of my wife and kids not totally understanding that there is not a ‘car fairy’ that tidies after them, but enough on that. The fact is, if you want a nice, reliable, late model Mercedes-Benz, you could do a lot worse than a 212-series E-Class. And that leaves me with a lot of space left on this page.

There are few Mercedes from the 1980s that excite me, but I do have a very soft spot for the OM617 inline-five powered diesels. Heck, I learned to drive in a 1981 W126 300SD, and the first Mercedes I bought exclusively for my own use was a 1984 300D Turbo. There is something comforting and mesmerising about the clatter and thrum of that motor, and it has enough ‘go’ to get out of its own way. Besides, they’re built with the intention of

surviving the apocalypse, along with cockroaches and Twinkies.

So with some room on the driveway and a little money in the bank, I decided that nostalgia would rule the day and I started surfing the internet for a nice W123 300D or W126 300SD. From the start, I learned a few key things: truly good cars are extremely hard to find, and very expensive when you do find them; mediocre cars are generally priced at about double what they should be; horrible cars are all too often represented as ‘excellent’ ones.

DREAMING OF A DIESEL

Nonetheless I persisted, until I stumbled upon the car you see here: a 1985 300SD Turbodiesel, with 904 Midnight Blue paint over palomino leather, 113,000 original miles, the optional rear headrests (!), and everything functional excepting the power aerial and fuel gauge. The price was reasonable, so how could I go wrong?

First the good: the paintwork on the car is excellent, and repair work on the rear end is only really noticeable because the badges are in the wrong place. Furthermore, the car drives as well as any 126 I’ve experienced – the engine makes good power and gearshifts are smooth. The air con is ice cold, and there is nary a crack on the dash or leather seats.

On the not-so-good side, the car came with two real bugaboos: first, the tyres were so cracked that some couldn’t hold air for more than 24 hours; second, the charging system doesn’t. I had planned to replace the alloy wheels and tyres anyway, so this just ramped up the process. On the electrical side, diagnosis with the help of online forums has led me to a new alternator, which I’ll install this coming weekend. Fingers crossed! Wait – why did I buy this car again?

△ This W126 will hit 62mph in 15.2sec, on the way to 109mph.

▽ The leather and wood interior looks in fantastic shape.

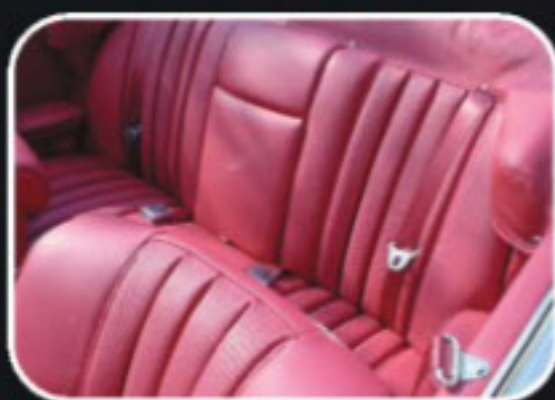
▽▽ Dark blue paint, and 113,000 miles done since 1985.





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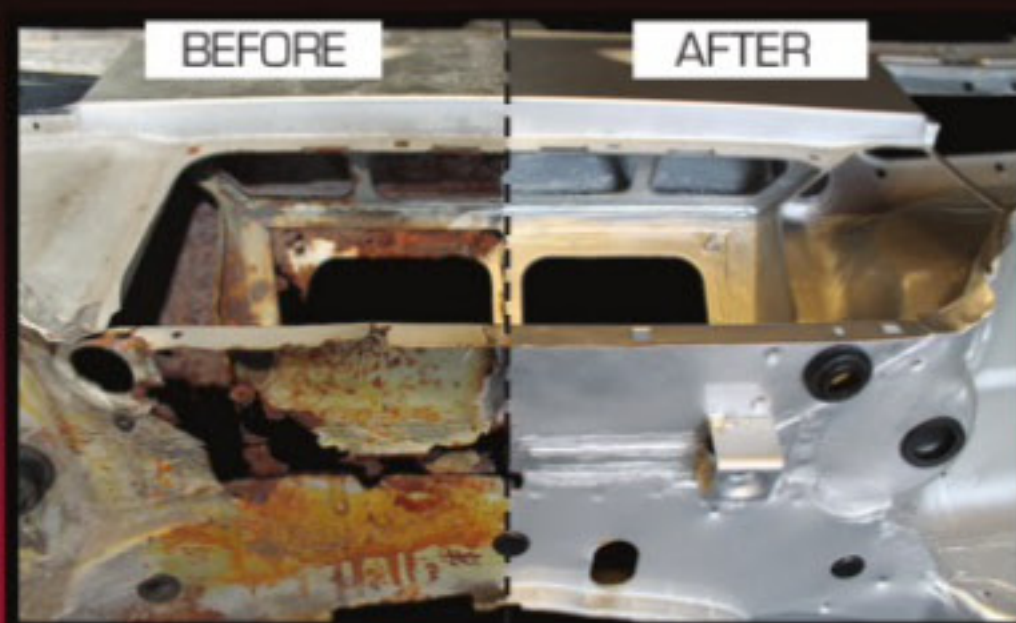
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DUTY CALLS

The arrival of warmer weather means it's time to wake the SL roadster from its winter slumber, but there are a few jobs to do before it hits the road

WORDS AND IMAGES **MARTIN BUCKLEY**

FACTSHEET

CARS 1967 W108 300SEb/1996 R129 SL320

OWNER Martin Buckley

LOCATION Gloucestershire, UK

PURCHASED Dec 2011/July 2014

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT A fresh MOT certificate and road tax for the SL; W108 saloon part exchange deal on hold



Just £127 later, we were taxed for six months and road legal

THE SL320 IS BACK ON the road after its winter break. There was a false start in April when it was disinterred for a road test; with a boost from the battery charger it fired pretty much first time but initially had a substantial leak from its fuel pump (a rubber seal had probably dried up through lack of use), which mysteriously cured itself. Having removed the hardtop and put it on its stand, the fabric roof then threatened to not raise itself, but it just required a firmer and longer jab of the magic red button on the centre console.

When I decided to tax the SL a few weeks later, I discovered that the MOT had run out, so the following week I ran it to R S Autos in Cirencester, where it passed the test with a handful of advisories including a weak handbrake (probably the case when it was new, I suspect) and a loose exhaust bracket.

TAXED AND TESTED

Just £127 later, we were taxed for six months and road legal. The main function of the car is as an ego boosting vehicle for my now wife Mia to use on sunny days while sharing it with her father John, who coveted the R129 SL from new. He helps us with upkeep and restoration of all our other cars, and his

joint ownership of the green SL320 is a kind of 'thank you' for that.

As well as cruising around in the car, John enjoys cleaning it up and soon set to it with the polish and vacuum cleaner to bring it back up to standard. He is much happier with this car's lack of 'float' in the steering box, which could be as much to do with tyres and shocks as the box itself, as there is not much play at all around the straight ahead.

The CD player has never worked and the code we have been given doesn't unlock the head unit, so John is going to try the 'freezer' trick: apparently some hours in the ice box can somehow put the system back to 'zero' and allow access to reset the code.

I still enjoy the SL320, although it's not really 'me'. That said, I respect the car's sheer competence and I cannot ignore its six-cylinder performance.

Our former, light blue 500SL (registered G6 CUT) continues to figure in conversations about these cars because Mia preferred the colour. But I have learned from the current owner that the powered top has packed up, which slashes its potential value to banger

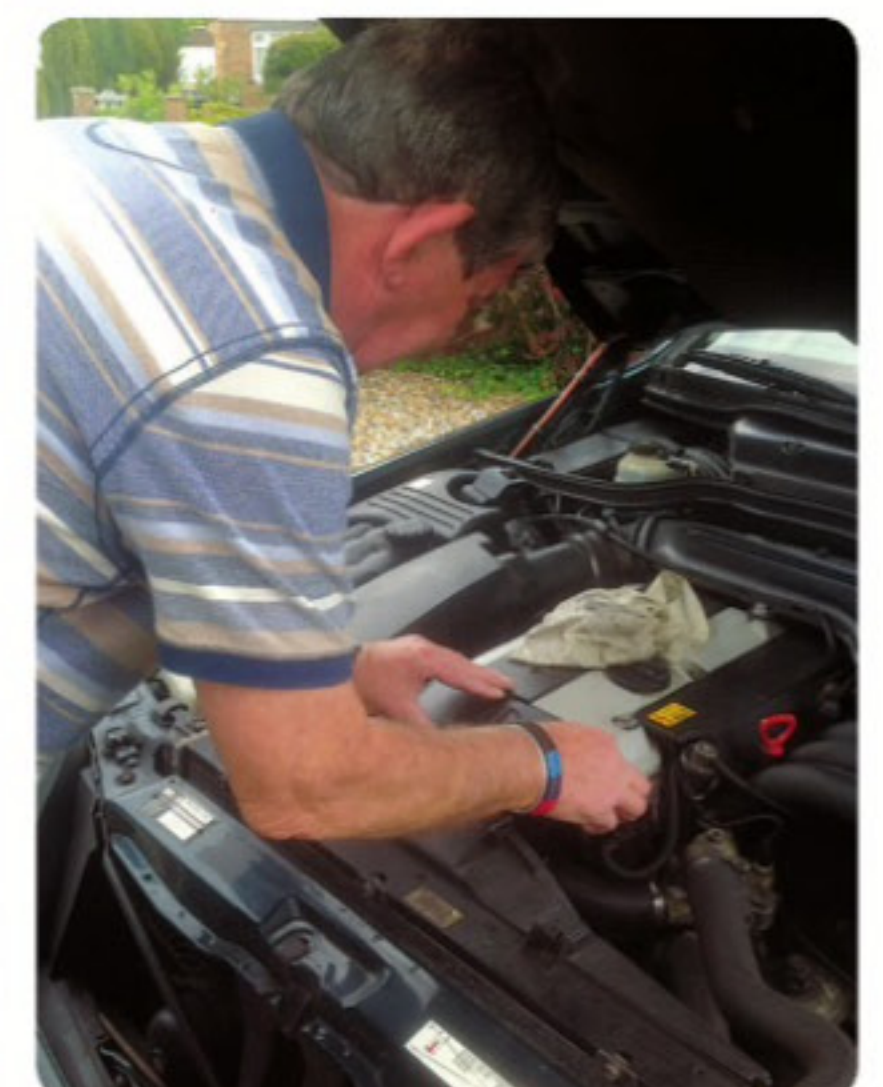
levels. However, I don't think Mia will ever really love the SL320's dark green, so who knows what will happen. Perhaps there is a deal to be done.

The lovely W108 300SEb is awaiting a resolution to the complex deal it has become embroiled in against a Lancia Flaminia GT, and I'm not holding my breath for an outcome.

As reported last time, the cream W123 200 went up to Manchester on a trailer and has now been sold on after I dealt it against a Series 2 Jaguar XJ 5.3. On the day of the swap, the Mercedes refused to fire up while the Jag was 'on the button', which is a reversal of the normal state of affairs. All I will say is this situation didn't last for long!

△ Fuel leak cured itself, as did the momentarily recalcitrant roof!

▽ The SL320's new co-owner loves getting his hands dirty.



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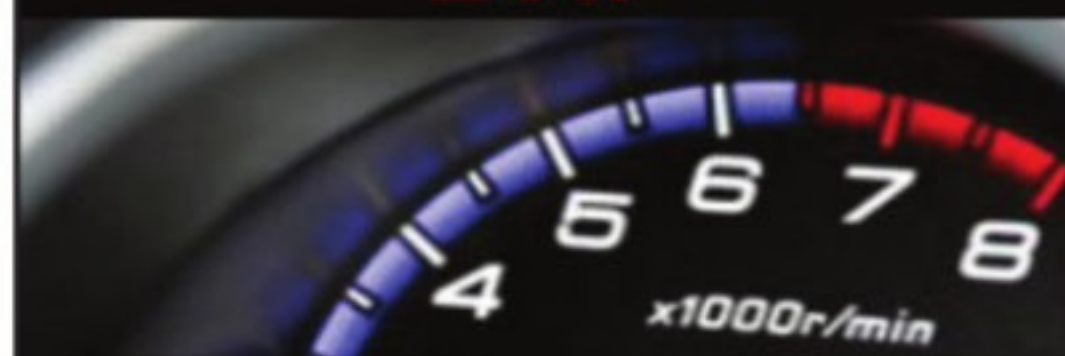
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220B, manual, 1962, LHD, grey with grey/blue trim good solid condition, excellent running order, tow bar, with genuine M-B rear pump up airbag for heavy towing, needs new headlining, hence the price. £5,750. Tel: 01474 7058586 or Mob: 07719 779597. Dartford, Kent. **[GHP18]**



E36 AMG Cabriolet, a rare W124, 1995, 3.6 straight-six petrol, automatic, Tourmaline Green metallic, electric roof, windows driver seat, air con, climate, original M-B radio cassette and six-disc auto changer, electric aerial, tan leather, 17-inch alloys, good service history, 180,000 miles (less than 10K per year), one of only 14 AMG cabriolets. Tel: 07967 573903, Milton Keynes. **[GHW13]**



C280, 1997, genuine 35,000 miles, FSH, leather Interior, heated seats, electric sunroof, AMG alloys, full MOT, this car is one of the best available and is immaculate throughout you won't find better, private plate included. £4,995 ONO. Tel: 07725 987340. Stourbridge. **[GH12]**



C124 E220 Coupe, auto, 110,000 miles, service history, silver with grey leather, recent respray, new exhaust. £1,495 ONO. Tel: 07906 856612. West Sussex. **[GHW11]**



SL320, 1998, silver matching hardtop and stand, black leather (heated/perforated) seats, massive number of factory extras, owned since 1993, always garaged, lovely condition, taxed and MOT'd, recent service, 77,000 miles, £11,500. Email: gmn2008@hotmail.com or Tel: 01869 345 801. North Oxfordshire. **[GHW10]**



300SL, 1986, owned since new, collected from factory, lovely mid blue with grey check interior, always kept in heated garage, car is in pristine condition, rare and fabulous offer. £22,500. Email: gmn2008@hotmail.com or Tel: 01869 345801. North Oxfordshire. **[GHW9]**



380SE, 1984, Thistle Green, all leather interior, 116,000 miles, right-hand drive, mechanically good, paintwork reasonable, a few minor niggles easily fixed. Please call Tim for further information. Tel: 01353 665059. **[GHW8]**



300SE, silver, blue cloth, 140,000 miles, part MBSH, unmolested alloys and steel strong engine, smooth gears, mechanics 100 per cent, everything works, clean, taxed until 08/15, body work 95 per cent rust free, paint needs mopping some small marks, but very good, used daily, three previous owners. Tel: 07814016411, Farnborough, Hants. **[GHW6]**



E220 Coupe, 1995, automatic, Azurite Blue, with light blue leather interior, excellent condition inside and out, no rust, good Michelin energy saving tires, Dinitrol thick weather resistant underbody protection, free road tax from 2016. £3,295. Tel: 01724 720146. Scunthorpe. **[GHP2]**



E300 Turbodiesel Avantgarde, five-speed automatic saloon, slide/tilt glass sunroof, A/C, cruise control, CD radio, one years MOT, 98,000 miles, private plate included, 1997/reg. £1,995. Tel: 07813 283351. Rhyl, North Wales. **[GHP3]**



190D, 1990, diesel auto, 2.5, blue, 61,000 miles, five months MOT and tax, good condition, two former keepers. £2,700. Tel: 01663 732485. Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire. **[GHP4]**



190E Zender, a superb car, 1.8, five-speed manual, full bodykit, slightly lowered on new German tuning springs, fantastic condition, must be seen and driven, drives beautifully, sunroof, stainless rear sports exhaust, new oil, oil filter, rear axle fluid, air filter, if I get £2,500 for this car, I will get a new MOT. Tel: 07444 011972. East London. **[FGW15R]**



300SL, convertible, 1992, 24-valve, auto, outstanding condition, genuine 78,000 miles, Light Blue metallic, navy electric soft top (replaced 2007), tan leather interior, service history, MOT March 2016, Sony Bluetooth audio, electric/windows e/seats, e/aerial, air conditioning new alloys, hardtop storage frame, for more info and photos call. £12,950 ONO. Tel: 07785 243376, West Malling. **[FGW14R]**



450SL, a very rare 1979 car, excellent condition, externally with no bubbling or fade of the paintwork, interior needs some work, driver's seat needs recovering, mechanically sound £6,500 ONO. Tel: 07854 133522, Plumpton Green. **[FGW13R]**



E220 Coupe, 1995, 106,000 miles, one previous owner, rare heated seats, massive history file including original bill of sale, full unmarked leather, body work like new, car is showroom condition, needs to be seen, last owner bought car from Autobahn, rare colour and options make this an excellent investment. Tel: 07414 645544, Barnsley (J37, M1) **[FGW12R]**



420SE, 1991, 160,000 miles, Nautical Blue, Beige interior, acquired by the same owner in 1994, excellent condition, following £9,000 restoration over last three years, best offers over £6,000. Tel: 01249 720181, Chippenham. **[FGP11R]**



R107 300SL, red, 28,000 miles, service history, beige MB-Tex interior, unmarked, hard and soft top, auto, excellent condition throughout, purchased from reputable classic Mercedes-Benz dealer. £26,000. Tel: 01745 814673. **[FGP10R]**



E320 CDI, 2000/16, MOT until May 2016, FSH, 170,000 miles, excellent all round condition, no rust, waxoiled, garaged, and well looked after, first to see will buy, £1,395.00 OVNO. Tel: 0208 660 538 or 07584 020272. Whyteleafe, Surrey. **[FGW9R]**



190E, saloon, automatic, 1.8, black, 1993, 158,433 miles, fully refurbished, immaculate, smooth quiet drive, next MOT October 2015, part service history, manual sunroof, electric windows, leather trim, height adjustable, driver's seat and passenger seat, metallic paint, alloy wheels, spare wheel, paintwork close to perfect, owners extremely fastidious in upkeep, £2,250 ONO. Tel: 0207 7944495. Kings Langley. **[FGW7R]**



W126 560, 12 months MOT and road tax, the car has been in our family since 2001, it has been well looked after and has a good service history, the largest bills were for a top end overhaul 2003 and recently reconditioned height valves (front and rear) from USA, new suspension bombs and pump, it drives beautifully, negative side is body work beginning to get scruffy, car park dents in rear doors, front wings starting to rust, rear wheel-arch rust, all superficial and nothing major, sunroof not working properly, it is an honest car, I will be sad to see it go, ideal restoration project for the willing. Tel: 07702 832780. Twickenham. **[FGW6R]**



S320, 77,180 miles, original Blaupunkt radio system, leather seats, electric seats, front heated seats, electric sunroof, climate control, double glazed windows, automatic door closure, amazing clean car inside and out, fully loaded, one owner, buyer will not be disappointed, beautiful car to drive and very smooth. Tel: 07786 070839. Birmingham. **[FGW5R]**



230SL Pagoda, 1966, right-hand drive, automatic gearbox, hardtop and soft top, restored to the highest standard, engine rebored, new mains and big end bearing. Tel: 01692 402463. North Walsham. **[FGW4R]**



300SL, black, 1988, 145,000 miles, 12 months MOT, hardtop and stand, rear jump seat, mechanically very sound, some rust hence price. £6,000 OBO. Tel: 07770 435537, Wokingham Berkshire **[FGW3R]**

W140 S280, 48,000 miles and mint condition with one previous owner, 1997, auto, Azurite Blue with mushroom leather, recent £1,000 MB service, first to see will be mightily impressed. £4,950. Tel: 07929 491901. Brighton. **[DEP2R]**



A124 E320 Cabriolet Sportline, 1994, four-speed automatic, Tourmaline Green metallic with beige leather interior with wood trim, brand new black hood by d: class automotive, new full wiring loom, plus many other expenditures, full service history with many bills/ MOTs/all original handbooks and wallet, toolkit, 2x electric heated seats, 2x airbags, air con, HLWW, Sportline chassis, eight-hole alloy wheels with smaller diameter steering wheel and full Sportline badging, remote central locking, 'MBZ' cherished plate is included, MOT till October 2015, a gorgeous car in great condition with a contrasting and favoured colour scheme. £12,650 OVNO. Tel: 07956 995556. Pinner, Middlesex. **[FGW2R]**



W123 280E, reluctant sale of a very rare and much sought after 1982/Y reg Mercedes W123 280E. This is not an import and is registered in the UK with RHD, four doors, saloon, petrol, automatic, 101,000 miles, all round electric windows, aerial, working electric sunroof, alarm, interior wood trim finish, matching hub caps and fitted with a Mercedes rear spoiler. Tel: 07905 819740. North London. **[FGW1R]**

SLK, 2.0 auto, 51 plate, silver, less than 40,000 miles, two lady owners, service history, excellent condition throughout, new MOT, reluctant sale. £4,950 ONO. Tel: 07768 573730. Wimborne, Dorset. **[GH]**

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Merces for sale



E250 CDI AMG Sport, 35,000 miles, 2011, designo Mauritius Blue (£4K option), full AMG quad exhaust and diffuser system (costing £2K), rear lip spoiler, all usual sport spec, stunning car that turns heads everywhere I go, immaculate condition. £19,500 ONO. Tel: 01275 872710 or 07875 142419. [EFW24R]

C240, 2000, Smoke Silver, cream upholstery, main agent maintained, lovely car only 69,000 miles, auto, air con, sunroof, remote boot opening etc, phone for full set photos, too many cars forces sale by club enthusiast. £3,100. Tel: 07818 068307. Wiltshire. [EFW17R]

OVERSEAS MERCEDES



500SL, 1982, with soft and hardtops, gold with plaid wool and MB-Tex interior, and black soft top, 28,000 miles, Tom Hamilton. Tel: 001 585 385 9078 arm1@rochester.rr.com USA. [GHW16]



500SL, 1991, charcoal with tan interior, 89,000 miles, excellent condition, both tops, all new hydraulic cylinders for the soft top, second owner car, original window sticker, lots of service records, drive anywhere, Keith. \$11,000.00. Tel: 001 561 842 2046 Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. [GHW17]



280SL, one of a kind, 1970 280SL, five-speed manual; **300 Turbodiesel** with all metal parts moly chrome, 3:23 rear, alloy wheels, Nardi steering wheel, A/C, two tops, gets 30 to 37mpg, burns 25 per cent recycled veg oil! Been my every day car for 37 years. US\$95,000, California car. Tel: 001-818-908-8940. Email: aj.popky@gmail.com. Sherman Oaks California. [GHW7]



W111 280SE Cabriolet, 1969, 70,980 miles, second owner since 1971, becoming more rarely available, good, unmolested condition (V8 in similar condition sold for \$473,000 at Scottsdale, January, 2015). \$325,000, contact Mrs Robins. Tel: 001 905 764 6363 or email: donnarobins@rogers.com Toronto, Canada. [CM4P2R]

PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES



For sale, Genuine Mercedes wind deflector for R129 SL models, excellent condition, like brand new, you can no longer get these from Mercedes. £160 ONO. Tel: 07973 836043. Sandhurst, Berkshire. [GHW21]

For sale, never used two door mirror covers, in Palladium Silver, fits 2007-on W204 C-Class, brand new in box. £50. Tel: 01924 896786. Astley, Manchester [GH]



For sale, four original wheels for Mercedes cars for R107s etc, the tyres are five years old and have not been used. £250, buyer collects. Tel: 07789 516151. Thame, Oxfordshire. [GHW20]



For sale, chrome Mercedes decanter, perfect condition with original presentation box, brought from Derfield & Company, Piccadilly, London in 1968, lovely example of classic Mercedes automobilia. £800 or offers. Email: Kerrinbywater@gmail.com or Tel: 07950 678095. Fareham. [GHW15]



For sale, cream cloth interior for C124 coupe, removed from car seats, headrests, armrests and door cards, VGC, buyer collects. £120 ONO. Tel: 07771 902912. Cambridge. [GHP5]

For sale, W210 E220 diesel saloon, 2001, 1x front and rear o/s door, bonnet, various ECUs, f/pass airbag, exp tank, brake fluid res, washer bottle, all cheap, please ring for details. 0208 660 4538 or 07584 020272. Whyteleafe, Surrey. [FGR]

NO. PLATES

MBZ 8

MBZ 8, ultimate mercedes V8 numberplate for sale, MBZ 8. £9,999. Tel: 07792 777709. London [FGR]

6498 RU

6498 RU, on retention, assignment fee paid, bargain for quick sale. £950. Tel: 01803 551383. South Devon. [FGR]

N111 SJE

N111 SJE, personalised registration for your classic Mercedes on retention. £395 ONO. Tel: 01622 532520, Ashford Kent. [FGR]

RI PCE

RI PCE, personal plate for sale R1 PCE on V778 retention document ready for transfer. £1,395 OVNO. Tel: 07979 693958. Stockport. [FGR]

H12 JBE

H12 JBE, personalised registration for your classic Mercedes on retention, assignment fee paid. £395 ONO. Tel: 01622 532520, Ashford, Kent. [FGR]

9 SLK

9 SLK, registration plate (9 SLK) £19,500 (O.I.E.O.) please contact Sadie. Tel: 07738 478302. [FGR]

KJI 425

KJI 425, personalised registration for your classic Mercedes on retention, assignment fee paid. £595 ONO. Tel: 01622 532520, Ashford, Kent. [FGR]

WANTED

Wanted, W126 500SE Two No. 7Jx15 H2, 15-hole alloy wheels required, tyres 205/65VR15, original Mercedes-Benz only, Part No. MA126 400 07 02, John Sadler. Tel: 01580 200243. [GH]

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230CE, automatic, August 1981. Metallic silver/blue. Blue cloth interior. MOT until February 2013, taxed until June 2012. 108,750 miles. Usable classic, superb drive. £2,150. Please call 01394 67429. Suffolk. (EP1)



CL500, 2000, 72,000 miles. AMG replica with massive 20-inch AMG alloys, tinted windows, adjustable suspension, remote central locking and phone in armrest. Best looking CL around. £6,000. Please call 07513 584535. Soham, Cambridgeshire. (EP5)



300E 2.4, automatic saloon. 1990/G reg, anthracite (blue-black metallic), 98K miles (increasing at weekends), tax May 31 2012. MOT November 2012. FMBSH except last two stamps are specialist's, rare 24-valve Conworth head and suspension. AMG alloy wheels with fresh Goodyear Eagle F1 tyres, folder full of paperwork. Sportline black leather interior including electric seats with driver memory, walnut trim, electric windows, electric tilt/slide sunroof, a/c, illuminated vanity mirrors, original M8 first aid kit, hands-free Bluetooth phone/CD/radio/pod/MP3. Headlamp wash/wipe. £4,495, offers welcome. Please call 07887 56100 or email AdamPearsonUK@gmail.com for more photos. (EP1)



A124 E30 Cabriolet Sportline, 1996/P reg, five-speed auto, metallic green/black, black hood, mushroom leather, 118,000 miles, service history, everything works, excellent condition, a pleasure to drive, reluctant sale due to retirement. £9,950 please call for full details, 40+ photos can be emailed. 01883 623220. Surrey. (EPW6)



320SL, P reg, champagne paint, sevena leather, new coco brown hood/hardtop. Very rare colour. 148,000 miles with main agent history. TV/CD player. MOT 12 months, six months tax. Stunning car. £4,750 ONO. Please call 07909 925574. Bristol. (EP2)



280CE, pillarless coupe, 1981/X reg. Only 67,000 miles. Red with beige trim. Electric sunroof and windows. PAS. Service history and old MOTs. Nice example of sought after car. Bargain at £3,995. Please call 07961 808069. Wimbledon. (EPW1)



SL320, superb condition, only 25,000 miles. Unique and original in every aspect. Registered 16/10/05. Blue leather, hardtop and stand. Full service history 12 months MOT. Two owners. £10,995 ONO. Please call 07801 587107. Cheshire. (EP3)



SL500, 1993, Obsidian Black, 52,000 miles, upgrade to 2000 model including full interior upgrade, body panels, glass panoramic hardtop, OZ alloys, sensors, folding mirrors, full service history, superb example. £7,995. Please call 07703 192894. London. (EPW2)



500SL, 1985, red/cranes hardtop. 96,000 miles only. Taxed and MOT. Owned three years - specialist maintained history this period. Last nine MOTs. Very reliable, previously restored. Minor detailing required. £8,750. Please call 04183 835538. Guildford. (EP4)



1972 Mercedes 6.3, RHD saloon, moss green with parchment leather interior for restoration, offers when seen, contact Alastair on 07710 350602 or Nigel on 07268 014442



S390, 2003, high spec. Includes sat nav/TVA, heated memory seats, sunroof, cruise control, climate control, 18-inch alloys, black/light grey leather. Full Mercedes service history. Immaculate condition. New MOT. Two owners, current owner since 2004. £12,995



S123 230TE, 1981/W reg, auto, left hand drive, one owner last 22 years, 240,000kms (around 150,000 miles). Engine rebuilt, lots of history, excellent condition. £4,995



C200 Sports, four-door automatic, 1998/S reg, second owner. 85,000 miles, full leather interior, 17-inch AMG alloys every high spec. In immaculate and flawless condition. Must be seen. £2,300 ONO. Please call 07860 648943. Middlesex. (EP6)



S500 L, 1996, silver, four-door saloon. Long wheelbase, double glazing, a/c, leather interior/black/grey sun roof, soft close doors, full service history, new tyres, well kept and maintained. Only owner, used as Chairman's car and kept for sentimental, only used now on sunny days. Garaged but now sold house so need to sell. Very high spec. Great runner, beautifully smooth V8. Really worth a view. £3,999. Please call Michael on 07768 624510. (EA1)



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With a 577bhp V8 biturbo engine and sophisticated suspension that tilts the car into corners, the S63 AMG Coupe is a luxurious express train for the road

WORDS AND IMAGES WILHELM LUTJEHARMS

FOLLOWING THE S-CLASS COUPE'S INTERNATIONAL launch in Tuscany in 2014, it was a pleasant countdown to receiving a local test car in the months that followed. I find that piloting a car on familiar roads always reveals more about its behaviour than when driving it on some foreign test route.

Mercedes-Benz calls its S-Class "The best car in the world". Not such an outrageous statement, but for me it is the coupe version that is better suited to that description. How so? Let me explain...

For starters, the styling is such a notable departure from the W/V222 saloon that the C217 coupe undeniably has its own, far sexier identity. Secondly, there is the engine range that is made up of two twin-turbo V8s, and a twin-turbo V12 in the S65 AMG. My time with S63 AMG entailed standard commuting to and from work, as well as the compulsory twisty sections close to where I live – the latter when traffic was mercifully light.

Sitting in traffic has never been such a relaxed affair. While the S-Class's perfumed air conditioning worked its magic, I switched between the different radio stations and checked all the seat support and massage options through the Comand system. When traffic began flowing again, I could cruise along with the slightest touch of the throttle pedal, but there was always the niggling feeling that the car was developed to stretch its legs.

It is when you tackle fast and flowing corners that the car's dynamic ability surfaces. Although it is a heavy two-door coupe, its composure through corners is nothing less than remarkable. The accelerative force of the engine hides the car's weight extremely well, and almost every time you press the throttle you need to make sure the steering wheel is as straight as possible, otherwise all that power can't be transmitted to the road and the electronic systems have to intervene.

You drive this way for a few corners and then you realise that, although the S63 will do it all day, such behaviour feels slightly inappropriate. The S63 AMG Coupe is built to cover long distances at great speed, while offering its

Its composure through corners is nothing less than remarkable

occupants the highest level of luxury and comfort. Mercedes-Benz South Africa thought against choosing the optional 20-inch alloy wheels on this test car, instead sticking with the standard 19-inch wheels, which contributed to a beautifully damped ride and low road noise.

After my last drive in the S63, a wicked thought dawned on me. Bentley turned its Continental GT into a GT3 racing car to participate in a few international racing series. Obviously Mercedes-Benz will use its latest AMG GT3, but what a race car this two-door S-Class would make! Not such a silly idea, I think. After all, just think back to AMG's roots and its 300SEL 6.8...

▽ AMG helm, dials and seats in the high grade cabin.



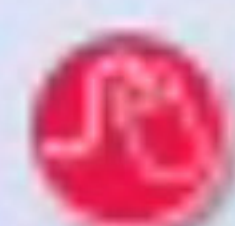
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