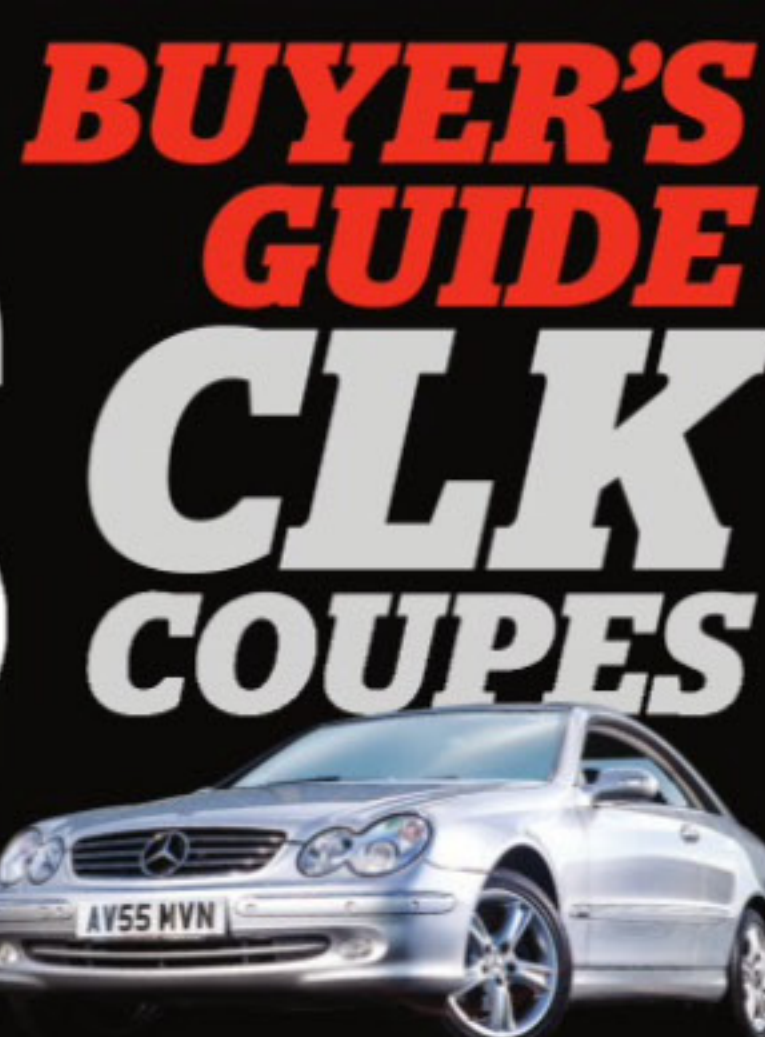


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March 2015

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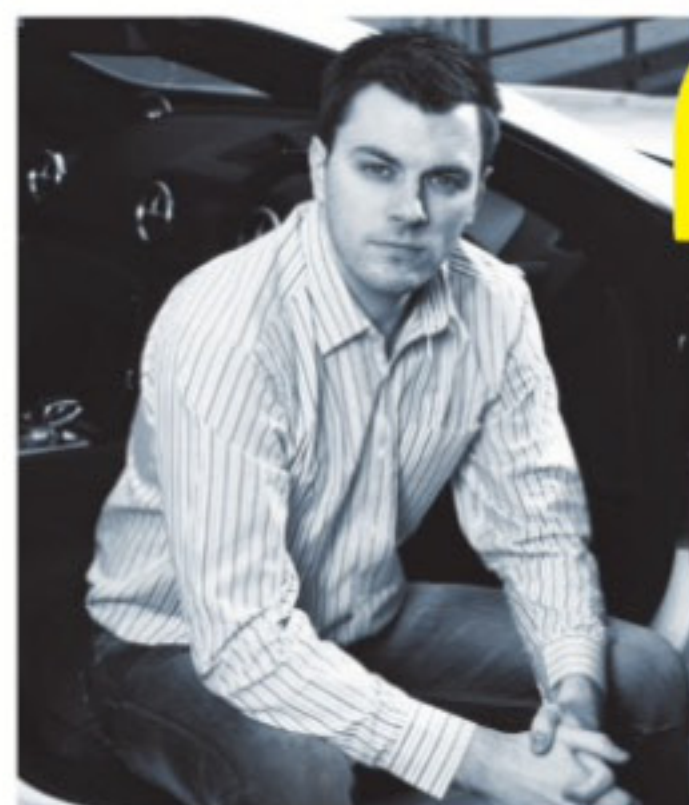
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Considering Maybach's rivals, it's a very bold strategy, but one that might just pay off

RECENTLY HAD A CONVERSATION WITH A READER WHO'D JUST PLACED AN order for a new Mercedes-Maybach S600, a car that you can read about from page 26. Clearly a man of considerable wealth and good taste (a rare combination these days), he uttered a word that I never thought I'd hear when the topic of conversation was a new Maybach. That word was 'bargain'. When you consider the Maybach (main image) built until 2012 came with a price tag in excess of a quarter of a million pounds, the £165,700 asked for the new - and entirely more advanced - S600 V12 biturbo model certainly seems... reasonable (I was going to write 'cheaper', but then I remembered for that amount of money you could buy a nice sized house).

The Mercedes-Maybach S600 is also over £14,000 less than an S65 AMG L, suggesting the famous 'double M' logo is being used in a totally different way than before, pitched as part of a flagship sub brand that isn't isolated from the family core with bloated price tags. Considering Maybach's rivals, it's a very bold strategy - but one that might just pay off.

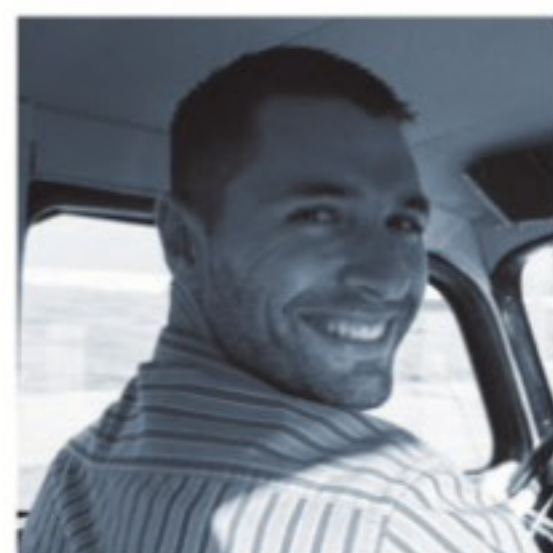
Elsewhere in this magazine, we look at two other exceptional S-Classes: a 116-series 280S with just 8,000 miles on the clock, and a 126-series 560SEL AMG. By complete coincidence, both cars resided in Japan from new, although led very different lives - you will have to read each feature (starting on pages 32 and 40 respectively) to understand exactly what I mean.

Don't forget Mercedes Enthusiast is available to download on the Apple iPad and iPhone, as well as the Kindle. And if you buy the magazine regularly, a subscription may work out cheaper for you. For full subscription details see mercedesenthusiast.co.uk. We'll soon be available on Android devices, too!



Kyle Molyneux
Editor

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



Wilhelm Lutjeharms

With only two Benz cars in existence living in South Africa, resident contributor Wilhelm Lutjeharms did not let the chance to drive one

of them, built in 1913, pass him by. "During the course of the afternoon, the owner revealed some very interesting facts about this car," he says. "And I won't be forgetting the challenging nature of its drive any time soon." Photographed in stunning South African scenery, this feature is not to be missed! Turn to page 48 to begin the adventure...



Steve Hall

We recently discovered a guaranteed way to attract the attention of every petrolhead within half a mile: drive the loudest, coolest, most aggressive looking car

you can find on the track outside Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey. "Within minutes, a huge group had formed on the balcony to witness the one-off SLS AMG GT3S in action," explains writer and photographer Steve Hall. "In this job, some days are better than others - this was definitely a better one." Get the full story from page 56.



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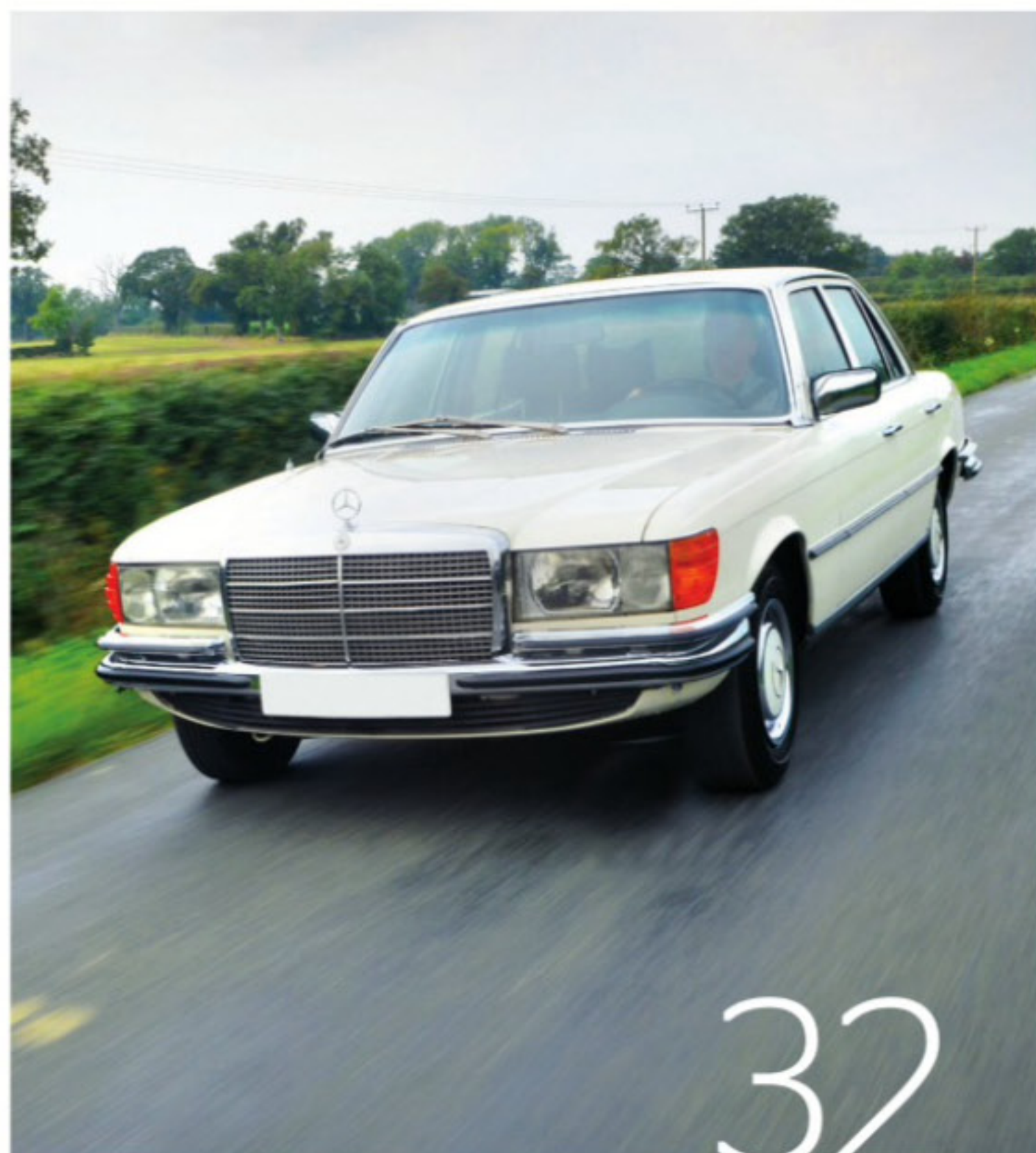
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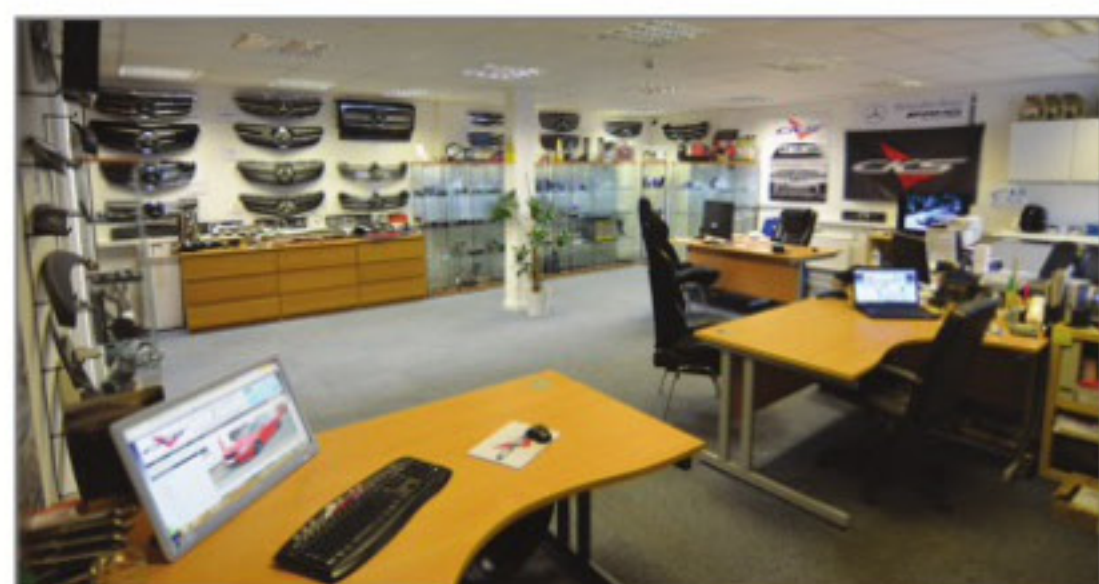
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The latest Mercedes launches, news and motorsport

NEWS

ON THE CHARGE

Mercedes-Benz chose the Detroit Auto Show to unveil new C-Classes with very different personalities



◁ This ultra efficient C-Class hits 134.5mpg on the combined cycle.

▷ Lithium-ion battery can be recharged in just under two hours.



THE BRAND NEW C350 E (plug-in hybrid) is the first of its kind, its two-litre, four-cylinder, turbocharged petrol engine developing 208bhp and 258lb ft torque, and teamed with an electric motor that turns out the equivalent of 80bhp and 251lb ft torque.

These figures earn the saloon a 5.9-second 0-62mph time and a 155mph top speed (estate: 6.2 seconds and 152mph). That's nothing compared to the efficiency figures though, the C350 e achieving 134.5mpg on the combined cycle, with 48g/km CO2 emissions (49g/km for the estate) thanks to its ability to run on electric power alone for up to 19 miles.

Airmatic air suspension and internet enabled Pre-Entry Climate Control are standard, as is the 7G-Tronic Plus automatic with a special hybrid module that incorporates the electric motor. The C350 e saloon and estate will arrive in the UK in April – expect price tags that are around £40,000.

The other C-Class launched in Detroit was the C450 AMG 4Matic,



△ The 362bhp/383lb ft C450 AMG 4Matic will arrive in the UK next summer.



△ AMG styling, suspension, steering and gearbox tweaks for this V6 biturbo.

complete with pumped up AMG styling and 18-inch AMG alloy wheels (19s are an option). Its three-litre, petrol powered, V6 biturbo engine summons 362bhp with 383lb ft torque – enough for the saloon to sneak under the five-second mark going from 0-62mph, with the estate just one tenth behind. Both cars top out at 155mph.

Despite following the plug-in hybrid C-Class, the C450 AMG 4Matic is hardly disappointing in the efficiency stakes – the saloon hits 37.1mpg on the combined cycle, with 178g/km CO2 emissions, while the estate version achieves 36.6mpg with 180g/km CO2 emissions.

Closing the gap between normal C-Classes and the full fat C63, the C450 AMG 4Matic boasts AMG Ride Control sports suspension with adjustable dampers, as well as sharper electro-mechanical steering, a faster shifting 7G-Tronic Plus automatic transmission, performance brakes, and a four-wheel drive system that feeds power in a 33/67 per cent split front and rear unless road conditions dictate otherwise. Expect to see the C450 AMG in the UK next year.

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MKB P700



Given the headroom built into the biturbo system, the potential of AMG's M157 V8 engine is well documented, and MKB has proved itself a master of engine recalibration.

The German tuner's new P700 electronic tuning programme has unleashed – yes, you've guessed it – 700ps (690bhp) with 1,000Nm (737lb ft of torque). In the CLS63 AMG Shooting Brake, that means a 0-62mph

time of 4.1 seconds (the standard car has 577bhp/590lb ft and takes 4.2 seconds) and a 211mph vmax with the correct footwear and no electronic speed limiter.

This first MKB P700 conversion (pictured) rides on 19-inch MKB Alpha III wheels, and is backed by a comprehensive MKB warranty. More details about this work can be found at www.mkb-power.de.

POWER HIKE FOR A45 AMG

WORDS IAN KUAH

Even though it is already the most powerful car in its class, the A45 AMG will benefit from a few mild tweaks to ward off would-be competitors when it receives its 2016 model year facelift.

Set to be previewed later this year, the revised car will see changes to its bumpers, and front and rear lights in line with the mainstream A-Class update. Inside, the minor changes will include trim upgrades and new features for the

infotainment system in line with current Mercedes models.

Of greater significance is a likely 15bhp power hike to 370bhp, which is easily achieved without affecting the long term reliability of the two-litre turbocharged motor.

This will be achieved through improvements to the fuel injection system and engine control software. At the same time, the AMG Speedshift DCT seven-speed gearbox will be further refined with improved shifting protocols.

While the extra power is part of the car's on-going development, it is also seen as the usual numbers game, at least in marketing terms, to ward off coming challenges.

Audi's new RS3 will debut in March this year, with 362bhp and 4WD.

AMG's improved four-cylinder motor and gearbox will be applied to the CLA45 and GLA45 as well, including the AMG version of the CLA shooting brake that *Mercedes Enthusiast* is testing very soon.

As for a Black Series version of a compact Mercedes, AMG chief Tobias Moers emphatically said, "The Black Series label will only ever apply to two-door coupes and roadsters!"



MEC DESIGN CERBERUS

German tuner MEC Design has unleashed an ultra aggressive 'Cerberus' bodykit for the 207-series E-Class coupe and cabriolet.

The 20-inch CCd5 alloys are just the beginning. There is a new front bumper with lip spoiler, and rear bumper with diffuser, plus widened arches, beefier door panels and matching, meaty side skirts, not



forgetting a heavily sculpted bonnet and five-piece rear spoiler. A four-pipe 'Earthquake' exhaust system, modified sports suspension, and upgraded interior complete MEC Design's Cerberus conversion. For more information visit www.mecdesign.de.



△ AMG GLE COUPE

Mercedes-Benz confirmed to *Mercedes Enthusiast* that the new Mercedes-AMG GLE63 S Coupe 4Matic will arrive in the UK this June (pricing is yet to be confirmed). You can read more about this 577bhp/560lb ft torque, V8 biturbo model from page 14.

□ RELOCATION

Mercedes-Benz USA is set to move its headquarters from New Jersey to Atlanta, bringing with it new jobs for the area. Employees will begin moving to the new location in July, and construction of the new building is expected to be completed in 2017.



△ TOP LUXURY

The Mercedes-Benz S-Class secured another victory in the annual and prestigious *What Car?* Awards, winning 'Best luxury car' for the second year in a row.

□ ARCHIVE WEBSITE

Mercedes-Benz has granted the public unparalleled access to its archives via a new website. Mercedes-benz-publicarchive.com is accessible without a login and features a vast array of pictures, documents and other information from the company's past.

□ PROFIT SHARING

Daimler is sharing the rewards of the successful 2014 financial year with its employees by paying out the highest profit sharing bonus in the company's history. The Board of Management and General Works Council resolved to pay a profit sharing bonus of €4,350 (around £3,250) to all qualifying tariff scale employees.

▽ MONSTER HIT

The new GLE coupe will star in *Jurassic World*, the newest instalment in the *Jurassic Park* franchise, released this coming June. Mercedes' 'Sports Utility Coupe' follows in the tyre tracks of the W163 ML used in *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*.



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MOTORSPORT NEWS

Mercedes AMG returns with a new F1 title contender, and confirms new drivers for its DTM campaign

FORMULA 1

The new generation of Formula 1 cars are much easier on the eye than last year's machines, which carried incongruously shaped nose cones designed to improve safety but which robbed the sport of some glamour. Mercedes AMG's new car, the W06 Hybrid (main image), was given an unofficial debut at Silverstone on Friday January 30, following leaked images of the car before its official debut on the Sunday.

Mercedes was joined by engine customer teams Williams and Lotus for pre season testing at Jerez on February 1. The notable absentee, and final team that will use Mercedes power, was Force India. Despite unveiling a new car at the end of January, the Silverstone based outfit failed to turn up for pre season testing in Spain. Will Force India be present in Australia on March 15 for the first race of the season? We certainly hope so...

► Williams-Mercedes debuted its FW37 at pre season testing in Spain.



DTM



Mercedes-Benz has confirmed eight drivers for its 2015 DTM campaign, all of which will drive a Mercedes-AMG C63. Continuing from last year are drivers Gary Paffett, Paul Di Resta, Christian Vietoris, Daniel Juncadella, Robert Wickens and Pascal Wehrlein. Newcomers are Maximilian Götz (pictured) who has been rewarded for his impressive performances behind the wheel of a GT3 spec SLS AMG, and also Lucas Auer who makes the jump from the FIA Formula 3 European Championship. The first DTM race of 2015 begins on May 3 at Hockenheim.

LIMITED-SLIP DIFFERENTIAL FOR C63

Birds, a performance tuning specialist based in Buckinghamshire, is now offering a Quaife ATB limited-slip differential for the 204-series C63 AMG.

The LSD channels torque to the rear wheel with the most traction, significantly reducing wheelspin and improving the control of power oversteer. Unlike conventional LSDs, the Quaife system does not have clutches, ramps, springs, or other components that wear out and require maintenance.

Priced at £1,346.74 including fitting (Birds will need your car for one day) but not VAT, this Quaife limited-slip differential is guaranteed to work with Mercedes' electronics and equipment, and comes with its own limited lifetime warranty. Head over to www.birdsauto.com for more details.





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We head to Mercedes-Benz World to test next generation virtual reality

INTERACTING WITH THE FUTURE

Virtual reality headsets are about to hit the mainstream marketplace, and Mercedes intends to make full use of their capabilities to sell its new cars

WORDS DAVID SUTHERLAND IMAGES DAIMLER AG

SQUEEZED INTO MY BUCKET seat next to journalist Chris Harris – a man giving his job description as “driving other people’s fast cars” – as he hurled the Mercedes-AMG GT S around the twists and undulations of the Laguna Seca race track in California, I experienced exhilaration and fear in equal quantities.

I wanted to stamp an imaginary brake pedal as he appeared set on proving himself the ‘Last of the Late Brakers’, my head then swimming as he steered into the hairpin, and through an equally tight bend quite soon after, my breakfast threatened to make a second appearance. On a long sweeping bend I turned my head to him and made out the grin inside the open face helmet as he held the Mercedes in a deliciously sustained power slide.

Simultaneously, my ears were pummelled by the most glorious of soundtracks: the combative bark of the four-litre biturbo V8 as Harris revved it to its 7,000rpm limit, the smack of stones hitting the underside, the occasional creak of cabin fittings under cornering g-forces. After this hot lap of the famous 2.2-mile circuit, Harris pulled into the pits. Thousands of miles away, at Mercedes-



VR allows you to experience passenger rides from the comfort of your dealership.

Benz World in Surrey, I rose from my seat, took off my Samsung Gear VR headset and passed it back to the Samsung demonstration team, having just experienced what is claimed to be the latest and best virtual reality experience.

VIRTUAL INSANITY

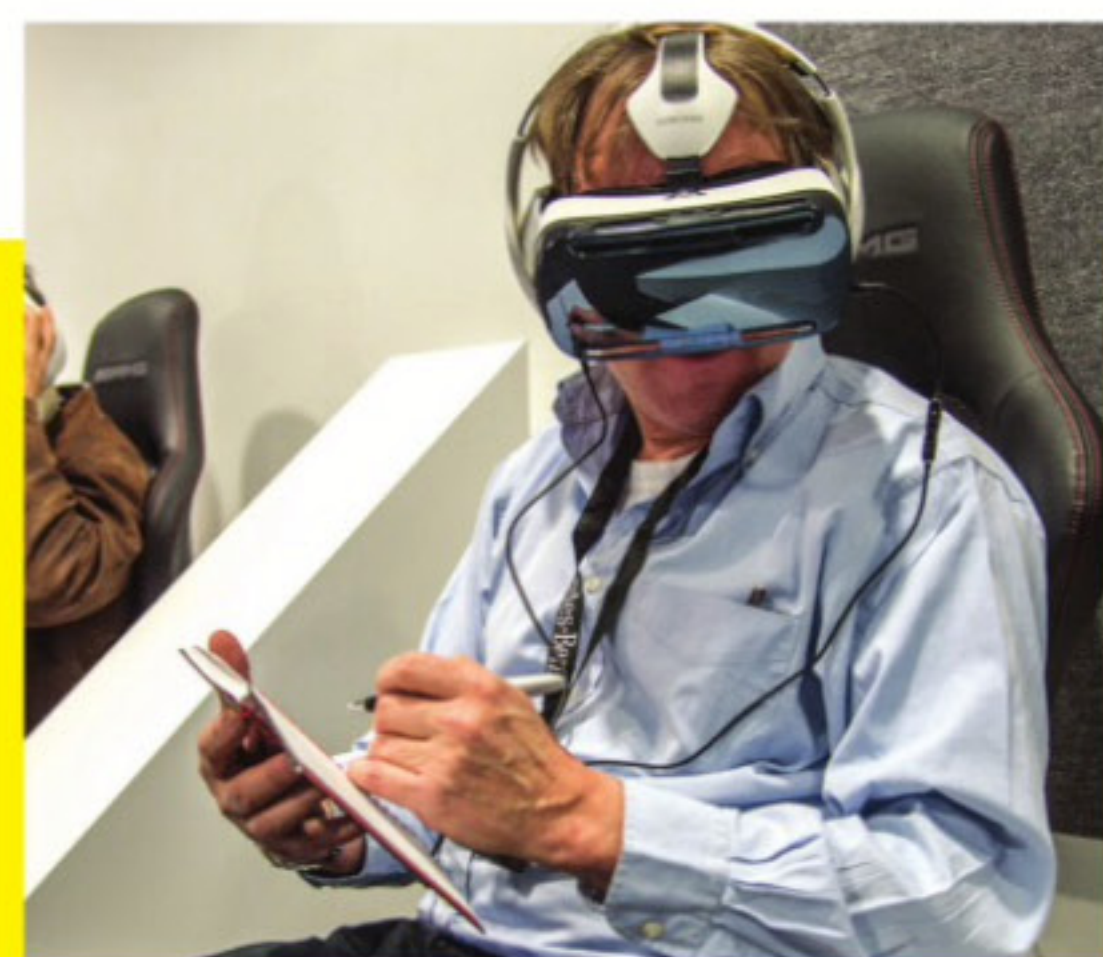
The Gear VR is a wireless headset utilising the new Oculus Rift 3D system, which allows you to ‘see’ beyond your normal peripheral vision, through 360 degrees in fact, when you turn your head. When docked with Samsung’s Galaxy Note 4 smartphone – which slots into the front of the headset, forming its case – you have access to app based movies and games.

It is so realistic, believe me. I could look down at the floor and out the side windows of the GT S, and it really did feel as though I was in sunny California and my life entrusted to one of our more track minded colleagues, not in damp and cold England in winter. So, this new and impressive device must be expensive? No, it’s in a shop near you for £169.

Fine. So I was playing a computer game that would be more suitable as my son’s birthday present. Far from it – the car maker staged the joint demonstration with Samsung in order to show the part that virtual reality in an advanced form will play at every Mercedes-Benz showroom in the not too distant future, and the footage from 2014’s media launch of the AMG GT S was a great way to showcase it.

Its chief purpose will be to demonstrate a Mercedes to a customer when the car in question is not present, or not in production yet. “It will allow a salesman to show what the car can do when it is driven faster than most people would ever drive it,” a Mercedes spokesman said. “At the moment, this is the closest anyone is going to get to an AMG GT.”

There will be more mundane, but equally important uses. “The salesman will be able to say to the customer, ‘We don’t have that car here, but put this headset on and you can see what all the trim combinations are’. It gives the customer the chance to sit in the car.” And should a customer happen to be in the showroom at the time of a new model unveiling at a motor show, detailed footage could quickly be available for customers to see. “Something happening on a Monday could be seen in the showroom on Tuesday,” the spokesman pointed out. It looks like game on, then.



▷ Note taking is optional with the Gear VR fitted!

“It really did feel as though I was in sunny California and not in damp and cold England in winter”



Cars of the future may drive themselves, but traditional driver entertainment remains a priority for now



THE NEXT GENERATION

Mercedes debuts a new self driving research car, plus the new GLE coupe and two new C-Classes in Detroit

WORDS NICK MAHER IMAGES DAIMLER AG

MERCEDES-BENZ MIGHT have managed to bag a morning slot for its press conference at the NAIAS (North American International Auto Show), or as it's perhaps better known, the Detroit Auto Show, but there were still some empty seats before Dr Zetsche rolled on stage. Blame Ford, the Blue Oval having just surprised the motoring world with a new GT supercar, leaving a few already show weary journalists' jaws agape at the new home market offering.

No such headline domination for Mercedes-Benz then, not least as it had already stolen its

own thunder by revealing the 'F 015 Luxury in Motion' research car at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas a week earlier (come back next month for our full report on this car). The concept vehicle might represent an autonomous future, but Dr Zetsche could be spotted steering it as it drove on stage! The future is not quite ready it seems, though the stand at a motor show is an alien environment for an ordinary car, let alone one that gets around by reading the world around it.

Zetsche stated that "the hottest movement in the automotive industry will be autonomous driving." He added that Mercedes-Benz is

convinced that autonomous driving means manufacturers will have to rethink cars entirely, saying that, in the words of Frank Sinatra, "The best is yet to come".

Promising more models, Zetsche highlighted that Mercedes has driven faster on track than its premium rivals, as well as in the sales charts. That statement is not entirely accurate, but there was no doubting that the mood of the company's head was upbeat.

LUXURY IN MOTION

In what has now become the usual format, Zetsche was followed by Dr Thomas Weber, Member of the Board of Management of Daimler AG: Group Research and Mercedes-Benz Cars Development, along with a pair of new C-Classes – the C450 AMG 4Matic and the C350 Plug-in Hybrid. Signalling intent,



▽ GLE coupe may hit UK as early as June.
 ▽▽ C350 Plug-in Hybrid announced.
 ▽▽▽ C450 AMG 4Matic with 362bhp.



◁ The F 015 offers a lounge like cabin for four occupants.

▽ GLE63 Coupe 4Matic boasts a 577bhp AMG V8.

▽◁ New Daimler AG board member Ola Källenius.



the latter model can cover 18 miles or so on electricity alone and Thomas Weber declared that plug-in hybrids represent “a major part for the next decade at least.”

With GPS technology that reads the car’s position, allowing the driveline to react to the road in the most economical manner, Weber described this C-Class as “the most intelligent of hybrids.” The German promised as many as 10 new plug-in hybrid models by 2017, with one arriving every four months using either a diesel or petrol engine.

“The hottest movement in the automotive industry will be autonomous driving”

HYBRIDS ARE HERE TO STAY

Buyers will need extension cords for the core model range then, as well as the SUVs, Weber saying that the GLC and GLE will also boast the ability to run on electricity. The plug-in hybrid concept represents the best solution for the near future, according to Weber, with the back up of a proper combustion engine while the infrastructure catches up.

Weber handed over to Ola Källenius, the youngest of the trio on stage and newly positioned on the Board. Delivering the slickest

presentation of all, Källenius said prophetically, “We are expanding from a star cluster to a galaxy,” adding that Mercedes wants to be able to provide the perfect car for any customer before revealing the new Mercedes-AMG GLE63 Coupe with permanent 4Matic four-wheel drive and a 577bhp V8 biturbo.

Källenius revealed that sales of 4Matic models have tripled in a decade, to the point where Mercedes-Benz now offers some 75 cars with four-wheel drive. Promising 2015 as the year of the SUV, Källenius said there’ll be four new GL variants coming in the next year, the GLE coupe getting an on screen debut – as the original ML did – in the latest in the *Jurassic Park* film series, called *Jurassic World*. “A tame predator,” Källenius said, before handing over the stage to American singer and Grammy nominee Mayer Hawthorne.

With the Geneva motor show in March, followed by automotive events in New York and Shanghai in April, the next few months will be particularly busy for the three-pointed star. *Mercedes Enthusiast* will be on hand to watch all the action unfold.



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

A DECADE OF BRILLIANCE



At the heart of many memorable modern Mercedes, the three-litre OM642 V6 turbodiesel has one more fan in the form of **David Sutherland**

In the October 2014 issue, *Mercedes Enthusiast* paid tribute to the AMG engineered, 6.2-litre, V8 petrol engine (M156) following the announcement that it would be replaced by the smaller but more efficient M178 V8 biturbo. I would also like to nominate a Mercedes engine I think deserves praise, and which is still current. And it's a diesel.

Please don't leave the page, diesels *can* be interesting. I'm talking about the OM642 three-litre V6, which for almost a decade has seen service in almost all Mercedes-Benz models from the C-Class upwards, and which, in its own low key way, is as much of a landmark motor as the monster M156 that powered a generation of Affalterbach's high performance models.

To appreciate why it is so significant, you have to understand Mercedes' long term relationship with the oil burning engine. Indeed it was Mercedes-Benz that kicked off diesel powered passenger cars when it introduced the W138 260D in 1936, its 2.6-litre engine producing 44bhp, and following it up with the significantly more economical W136 170D – it gave 46mpg – in 1949. In 1974 Mercedes introduced the world's first five-cylinder diesel for a passenger car, the three-litre OM617, which was installed in the 115-series saloon (the E-Class of its day) and which effectively made it the first executive diesel car.

In 1978, the car maker launched a turbodiesel version of this engine in the 116-series S-Class in the US (but not in Europe), and despite there being no market for private diesel cars there, sold over 28,600 of them in two years. Then in 1998, it introduced the 'common-rail'

diesel engine (along with the 'CDI' badge), a system whereby fuel is stored in a common rail before being distributed to the injection nozzles, and which brought sizeable improvements to economy and emissions.

These and other related innovations down the years mark Mercedes-Benz as an undisputed diesel pioneer. But there is just one problem – notwithstanding the clever engineering technology incorporated, these engines cried out for added refinement.

The above mentioned 1997 C220 CDI turbodiesel engine might have been the world's first direct injection common-rail motor, but the 2.2-litre four-cylinder tested

one's ear drums, and the OM646 of a similar capacity used in the succeeding 203-series C-Class provided a welcome but marginal improvement in this area.

At the high end of the diesel range, the OM613 straight-six, 3.2-litre turbodiesel at least delivered the acceptable performance that Mercedes' previous large diesels had lacked, but in a world of compact V6s was looking dated by the mid 2000s. At the opposite end of the scale, the diesels built for the first and second generation A-Class made sounds not entirely in keeping with the emblem on the grille.

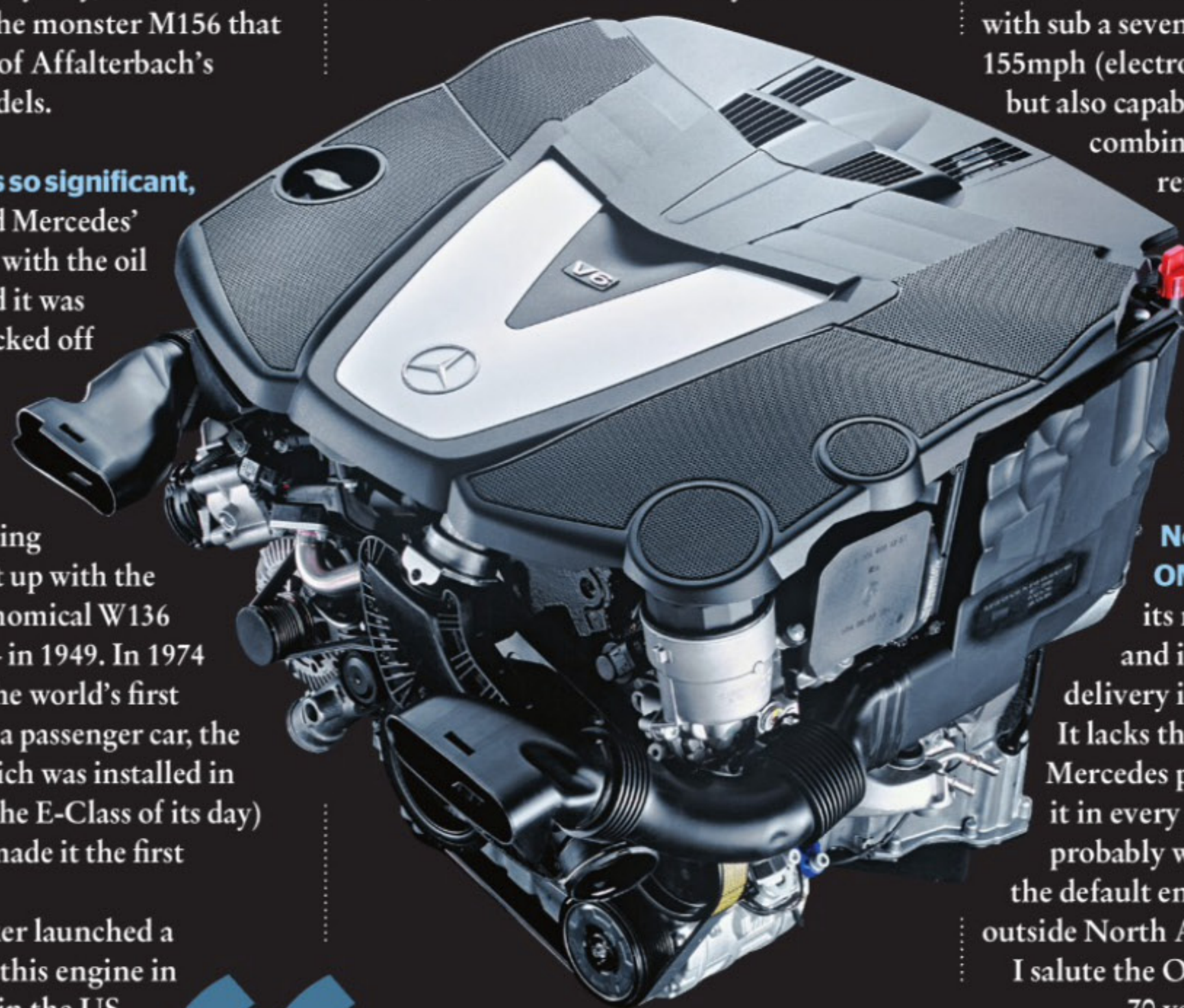
But in mid 2005, as if the past had not happened, Mercedes-Benz sprung its best ever diesel engine by a country mile, the OM642, its first berth the C-Class, which until then had run with the 2.7-litre, five-cylinder OM612. A compact design with its turbocharger mounted inside the vee, it was hailed as the first all alloy diesel in its class, and featured more accurate fuel metering and common-rail pump pressure.

To showcase it, Mercedes staged one of its demonstration runs, in which a trio of W211 E320 CDIs racked up 100,000 miles at 140mph without problems, and then crossed the US on one tank of fuel at nearly 60mpg.

The C320 CDI was a 221bhp/376lb ft car with sub a seven-second 0-62mph time and 155mph (electronically limited) top speed, but also capable of around 38mpg on the combined cycle. Nearly 10 years of refinement have seen output increased to 254bhp/457lb ft and efficiency improved to the point that CO2 emissions are comparable with those produced by small petrol engines of just a few years ago.

No matter what model the OM642 is in, it is a delight, with its refined, easy revving nature, and its almost ferocious torque delivery in its mid range sweet spot. It lacks the ultimate refinement of a Mercedes petrol six-cylinder, but beats it in every other way, I feel. This is probably why it has become practically the default engine in upscale Mercedes outside North America.

I salute the OM642, even if it took almost 70 years for Mercedes-Benz to finally come up with a diesel that is fun to use, as well as economical. Wouldn't it now be ironic if, as some predict, the pendulum swings back to petrol engines due to environmental concerns?



In mid 2005, Mercedes sprung its best ever diesel engine by a country mile, the OM642



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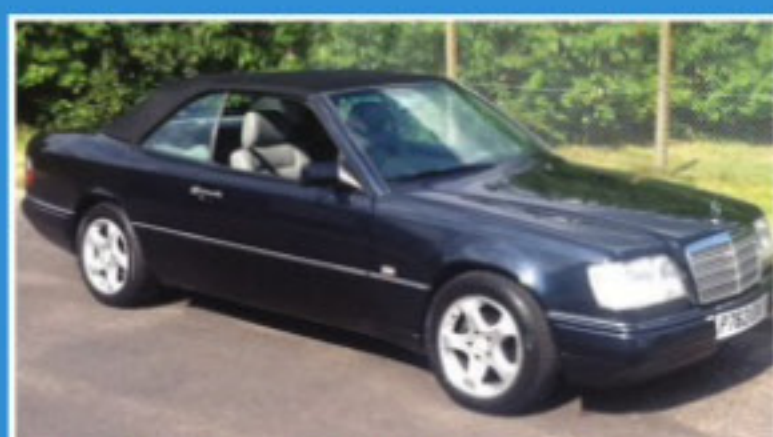
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280CE Auto , 85/C, 100k, leather	£6,500	420 SEC , 87/E, Silver, 172k	£3,000
E220 W124 , 98/R, 44k, manual, air	£5,000	E220 W124 , 01/51, 85k, manual, air	£2,990

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300SL Roadster 1988F

Signal Red, matching hardtop, black soft top, black sport check interior, automatic gearbox, ABS, cruise, electric windows, rear seat, original alloy wheels, FSH, 117,000m . **£17,950**



E220 Coupe 1994M - LHD

Brilliant Silver, Anthracite cloth, 5 speed manual, aircon, front & rear headrests/armrests, electric windows, electric sunroof, original alloys, one owner, FSH, 46,000m **£12,450**



300SL-24 Roadster 1992J

Brilliant Silver, new blue soft top, h/top, blue lthr, 5-Sp auto, high spec inc cruise, aircon, htd elec mem seats, elec st col, AMG susp/exh, 18" AMG style alloys, FSH, 73,000m . . . **£9,450**



230TE Estate 1983A

Ascot Grey, Charcoal cloth, auto gearbox, manual windows, manual sunroof, roof rails, cargo net & luggage cover, original alloy wheels, FSH, 95,000m **£10,950**



E320 Cabriolet 1993L

Pearl Blue metallic, blue leather, new blue soft top, 4-Sp auto, aircon, leather steering wheel, airbag, armrests, illuminated vanity mirrors, orig alloys, FSH, 125,000m **£12,950**



E200 Estate 1996N

Onyx Grey metallic, grey cloth, 4 speed auto, airbags, elec front windows, roof rails, cargo net & luggage cover, orig polished 8 hole alloy wheels, orig Blaupunkt, FSH, 45,000m **£9,950**



E280 Saloon 1995N

Azurite Blue metallic, grey cloth, 4-Sp auto, aircon, cruise, front & rear headrests/armrests, electric windows, electric sunroof, OTG, airbags, leather steering wheel, FSH, 53,000m . **£6,950**



E280 Estate 1995N

Azurite Blue metallic, grey cloth, 4-Sp auto, aircon, cruise, headrests/armrest, electric windows, electric sunroof, airbags, leather steering wheel, FSH, 69,000m **£9,950**



190E 2.0 LE Saloon 1993L

Brilliant Silver, Anthracite cloth, auto, airbag, walnut, elec windows/sunroof, headrests, armrests, Carat Duchatelet body styling, suspension & wheels, FSH, 2 owners, 103,000m . . . **£5,950**

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

THE NAME GAME



A burgeoning Mercedes-Benz range calls for revised model names - let our mystery writer help you understand the changes coming in the next few years...

If you're a parent, you'll know the pressure involved in choosing your child's name. This is no small undertaking, as it'll be with them for life - unless you get it so wrong they elect to change it via deed poll, or they go on to work in show business and need something a little more edgy.

Given the proliferation of Mercedes models, and the company's seemingly endless quest to fill every niche possible, and invent a few new ones in the process, naming all those cars is problematic. I still get confused about whether the GL should be GL-Class, or just GL, and whether a G is really a G-Wagen or G-Class (*They're all correct - Ed*). I've even been known to confuse these two off-roaders completely; imagine my surprise when a G-Wagen arrived on loan for a week when I'd actually meant to book a GL. Actually, that's a bad example - I love the G-Wagen and its boxy, bank vault build, so it was no real hardship.

But for many customers it's bound to be confusing. I spend every working hour immersed in the world of cars - not all built by Mercedes, admittedly - and as brands have grown and diversified, the breadth and scope of models have reached unbelievable proportions. As a child, I probably had more of a chance of describing each manufacturer's range than I do now. There's so much choice out there it's incredible. Of course, choice is good, but I digress.

With more models available than ever before, Mercedes-Benz has had to shake things up. There are now two sub brands, those being Mercedes-AMG and Mercedes-Maybach (I wonder if smart would benefit from being

Mercedes-smart?), while the rest of the line up has been revised. There are some exceptions: the SL will remain simply that, as will the G, while the core models will remain familiar: A, B, C, E and S. The name changes are largely on the periphery of the range, away from the core models that are long established.

We're familiar with the GLA, the 'G' signifying its off-road abilities, the 'L' a "linking letter that makes the model designations easier to remember and easier to pronounce: one that is familiar from the legendary SL, for example," according to Mercedes-Benz. Let's not even get into the debate

about the L originally standing for *leicht* (light), given the weight of modern cars. Finally, the 'A' marks the A-Class architecture on which the GLA is based.

The GLC name replaces GLK - GLC making sense as it's a G model with a C-Class platform.

That is unless you're a fan of Welsh, comedy rap group 'Goldie Lookin Chain'. The GLE name that replaces ML follows along the same lines, as does GLS which usurps GL. The same is true of Mercedes with SL in their names, although the SLK will become known as the SLC in 2016, even if that does sound like it should be a coupe version of the SL. The CL title is reserved for four-door coupes, leaving no clear nomenclature to delineate the grandest, two-door coupe, hence S-Class coupe for the latest, 217-series car.

What's interesting is that Mercedes-Benz claims that on its current trajectory it will have some 30 models in the market worldwide by 2020 - with at least 11 not having an immediate predecessor in the current portfolio. I pity those who collect car brochures as a hobby because they will need to look at investing in warehousing rather than the odd bookcase from Ikea.

Along with the wider name changes,

Mercedes-Benz will simplify its engine/drivetrain badging too. Petrol engines will remain unclassified except for a number - even if the number is now appropriate to position and performance rather than actual swept capacity. The Bluetec and preceding CDI will simply be signified by a lower case 'd', plug-in hybrids and electric drive the letter 'e', fuel cells 'f', and hybrids the letter 'h'. Four-wheel drive cars will continue with the 4Matic badge.

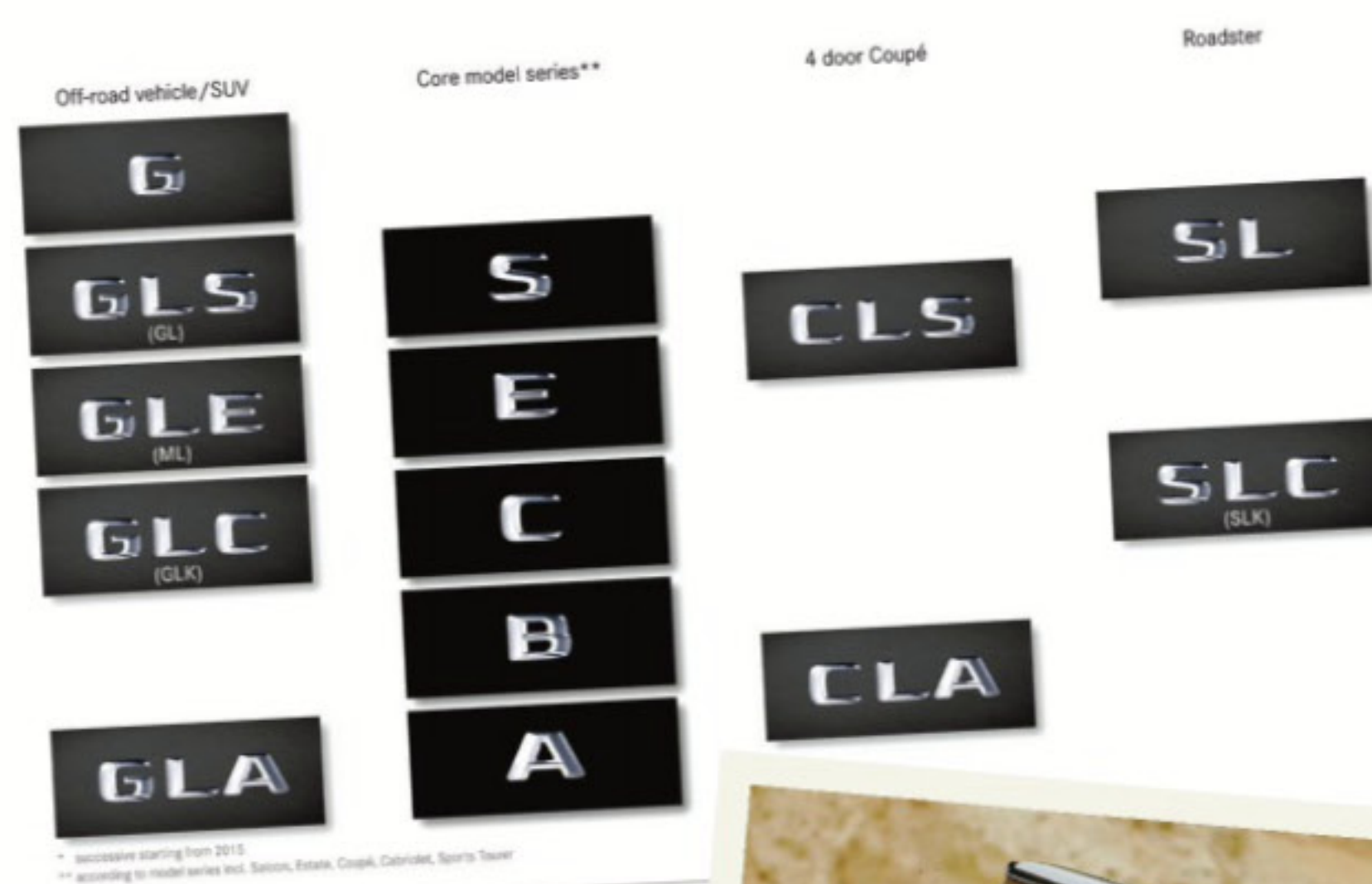
Like parents, the people at Mercedes-Benz will no doubt spend a lot of time explaining their new name choices and,

excepting one or two instances, they do make more sense than before. For now at least...

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

I pity those who collect car brochures as a hobby

New nomenclature Mercedes-Benz model series*



△ **The core models complete names of spin-off vehicles.**

▷ **All off-road types will use the 'G' from the G-Wagen.**



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



LETTERS

**STAR
LETTER**

PETROL POWER

I am constantly amazed at the great fuel economy figures achieved by the latest turbodiesel powered Mercedes-Benzes while on test at *Mercedes Enthusiast*.

With the pressure now on automotive manufacturers to develop these diesel engines further still, I thought it was encouraging to see that my nearly 10-year old, W211 E-Class 1.8 petrol can still achieve in excess of 45mpg on a good run.

While this saloon may not be able to maintain this level of fuel economy all the time – for sure, on short journeys an mpg figure of around 20 is more likely – it does go to show that the technology in older



Mercedes-Benz cars is still able to deliver great performance and economy when used in the right environment.

Buying new and taking a significant 'hit' on depreciation has its own impact on buyers' pockets, which is why I believe sticking with



an older model, while maintaining and servicing the car in line with the manufacturer's schedule – and using only genuine Mercedes-Benz parts – often makes more financial sense in the long run.

Declan Curley, Ireland

DON'T DO IT!

I note from the news item in the January 2015 issue that Mercedes-Benz is intending to replace the historic 'Sport Leicht Kurz' title for its small roadster with 'SLC' from 2016. To use a famous expression from the tennis world, "Mercedes, you cannot be serious!"

The SLK and SLC have histories totally distinct from one another – the SLK built in R170, R171 and R172 forms from 1996, and the C107 SLC coupe [shown below] derived from the R107 SL

Roadster and manufactured from 1972 to 1981. It makes utterly no sense to me to rebrand the next SLK iteration as SLC, unless this is Mercedes-Benz's way of subtly informing us that the next SLK is going to be a fixed head coupe rather than a vario-roofed roadster as it is currently.

Nick Wilcock, via email

TAXI!

I went on holiday to Cyprus in 1988 and we stayed at the Aloe Hotel in Pathos. The hotel ran its



own taxis including this long-wheelbase, 123-series 300D (pictured above). Amazingly, I have since found out that the hotel still uses one of these Mercedes some 27 years later.

Gareth Austin, Cheshire

BE THANKFUL

It's easy to take for granted all the mod cons that Mercedes fits to its cars. But I was doing no such thing in January while driving my 220-series S-Class. In Minnesota where I live, the winters are harsh (several feet of snow is the norm),

but my Merc makes light work of such conditions when fitted with the right footwear. Heated seats are nothing special today, but boy are they useful in temperatures well, well below zero.

And it's not just the comfort features that we should all be thankful for. The fact that my S-Class starts and runs perfectly in extreme winters is a true feat of engineering if you sit down and think about it. Sometimes it really does feel like you and your car against Mother Nature!

Charles Nelson, USA


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f "I guess we learn something every day." **Maciej Fialkowski**
- The 210-series E55 AMG 4Matic does indeed exist, built from 1999-2002 as a saloon, and 1999-2003 as an estate

f "That's a spicy meatball." **Willie Kamau**
- Two years after AMG became an engine maker in 1984, it gave birth to the 124-series 'Hammer' with a 5.0 V8

TALKING POINT



This month's Talking Point... What repair work have you carried out on your own Mercedes-Benz?

"I replaced the intake manifold gaskets on my 2008 E63 AMG. What a task!" **Peter Greenfield**

"I'm doing an engine and transmission swap from my 1983 300CD race car to my daughter's 1984 300D." **Dan Carchano**

"My 1992 300CE is so well laid out that doing the basic servicing is painless." **Robert Vint**

"I repaired the panoramic roof on my W211 E-Class, which saved me a small fortune." **Gareth Caffyn**

"I did everything from the transmission to the tyres and rims on my old, 1986 300E before I sold it." **Willie Kamau**

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

MERCSPOTTER



"These photographs were all taken in Marrakesh, Morocco, within the city walls," says reader Shaun Beal. "On one street, the battle scarred Mercedes taxis were four wide and went back for a couple of hundred yards. I noted that many of the cars were W123 240Ds, but others were 126-series SE and SEL models."

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

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

WHY I LOVE THE...

C180 KOMPRESSOR BLUEEFFICIENCY

With its 1.6-litre engine, does a former entry level W204 C-Class offer a true Mercedes-Benz experience? One contributor makes a case for it...

WORDS WILHELM LUTJEHARMS IMAGES DAIMLER AG

AS THE W205 C-Class started filling the pages of automotive magazines last year, the attention quickly turned away from its predecessor. It is understandable, for obvious reasons. Apart from being a new model, we have a C-Class that not only has several features and technologies shared with the 222-series S-Class that was only launched a few months earlier, but

even in terms of design it looks like a scaled down version of Mercedes's top luxury car.

However, for many reasons, the 204-series C-Class was very important to Mercedes-Benz. If performance cars make you sit up straight, you will know that this was the series that gave us the first C63 AMG. Then there was also the small matter of the most focussed C-Class model to date, the Black Series. Nobody can

forget a drive in that car! As a final fling, Mercedes-Benz produced the Edition 507 range of C63s – in my book cars that are destined to become highly collectible assets if they aren't already.

UNSUNG HERO

However, I remember this era of C-Class for another very specific reason – one that has nothing to do with AMG. Normally, it is the AMG version that stands out, but

you should never discount the most basic model in the range, often the purest car of the lot. And so it was with the W204 C-Class.

In 2008, Mercedes-Benz added three BlueEfficiency models to the range. Updates included newly developed tyres, which offered 17 per cent less rolling resistance, while aerodynamic tweaks allowed the Cd figure to drop to 0.27. There was also the six-speed manual gearbox with a shift indicator in the instrument cluster.

However, the most important change came in the form of the 1.6-litre petrol engine, which

Mercedes-Benz C180 Kompressor BlueEfficiency (W204)

ENGINE M271 1,597cc 4-cyl supercharged

POWER 154bhp@5,200rpm

TORQUE 170lb ft@3,000-4,500rpm

TRANSMISSION 6-speed manual, RWD

WEIGHT na

0-62MPH 9.5sec

TOP SPEED 143mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 44.8mpg

CO2 EMISSIONS 149g/km

YEARS PRODUCED 2008-2010

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





Up to 11 per cent better fuel economy and 19 per cent lower CO2 emissions.



△△ BlueEfficiency badge marked the 1.6-litre capacity.

△ Less cubic capacity but the same output.

▷ Materials a little dark, but a good sense of quality.



▽ Manual only for this super frugal C-Class saloon.

△ This C180 was supercharged but more efficient.



This six speeder did a fine job, and shifting between gears was an easy affair

replaced the 1.8-litre unit. Still supercharged, Mercedes-Benz ensured customers wouldn't turn up their noses at its new fuel efficiency measures, by making the new motor just as powerful as the engine it replaced.

In South Africa, my colleagues weren't overly enthusiastic about this car. Since the W203 C-Class, we associated the C-Class range with an autobox and the relaxed driving culture that reaffirms the ambience of this compact saloon. By the time the W204 range arrived, this opinion was even more etched into our minds.

The six-speed manual might not have been chosen by the majority

of C-Class buyers, but to me its rarity increased the allure of the car. It is definitely a slightly more relaxed affair to pilot the auto version, but if you want that additional interaction, why not change the gears yourself?

SELF PRESERVATION

On the one hand it feels totally at odds with the aura a C-Class exudes, but I found the manual gearbox to be mostly slick shifting and up to the task at hand.

Mercedes-Benz isn't renowned for its manual gearboxes, perhaps due to its focus on automatic transmissions from very early in its history, but this six speeder did a fine job, and shifting between gears was an easy affair. When allowed to shift gears yourself, you drive the C180 K in such a frugal manner that achieving around 40mpg is almost inevitable.


Criticisms could be thrown at the rambunctious engine – not something you would expect from a Mercedes-Benz – but the car still adsorbed bumps and undulations in the road as well as the other C-Classes that cost a whole lot more than this entry level version.

The interior was another highlight. Tastes obviously differ, but the square, straightforward design of the dashboard and fascia greatly appealed to me. Instead of a fixed infotainment screen that is

the fashion these days, the optional Comand screen on pre facelifted W204s was hidden within the dashboard until the driver switched

it on. The W204 is also the last C-Class that can claim to have an interior design connection dating back more than 20 years to that of the compact 190E.

Clothed in durable fabric, the standard seats may have given away some comfort to the more expensive alternatives, but they kept you neatly in place during most cornering actions, and their simple design suitably mirrored the rest of the cabin.

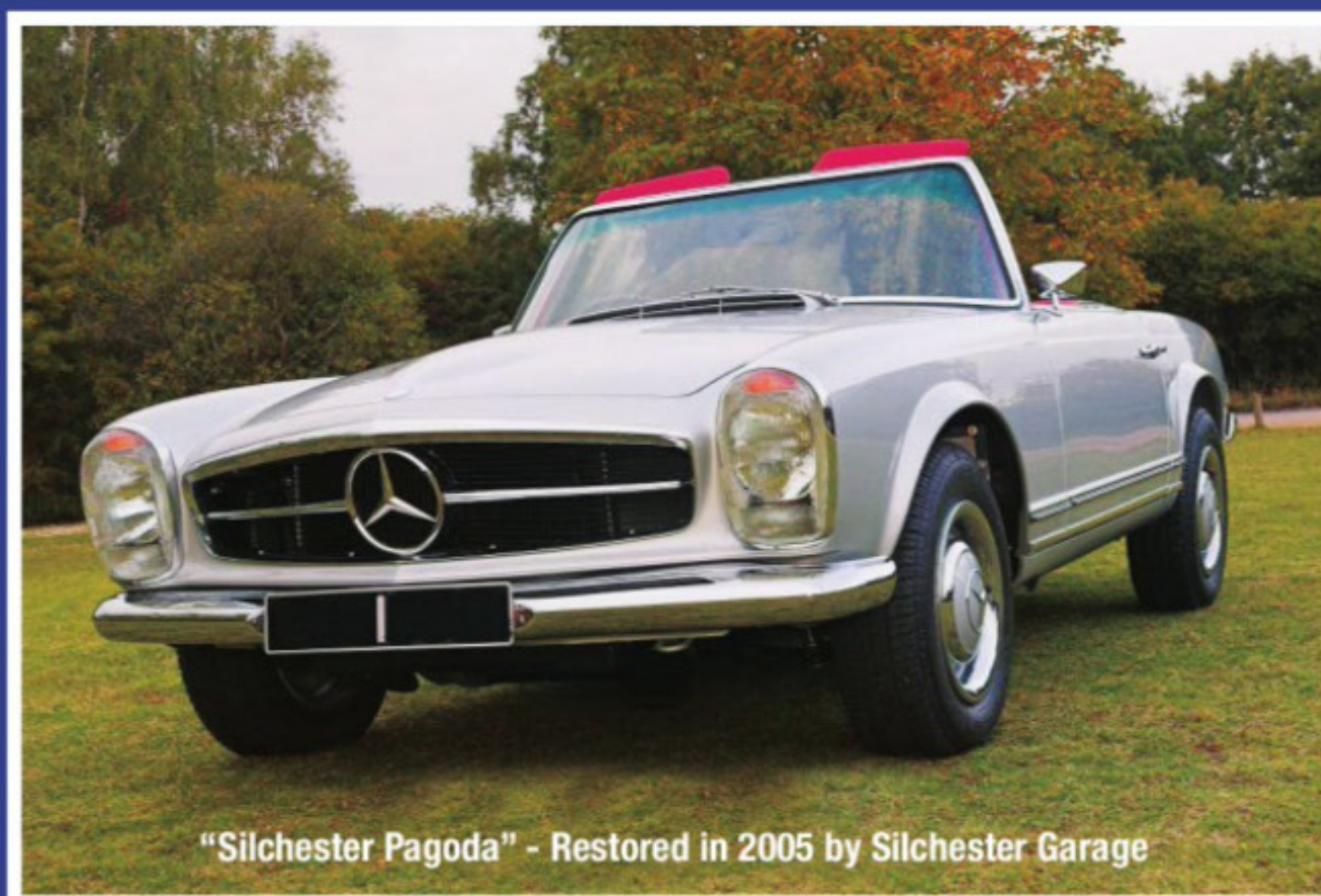
Although not perfect, this C180 Kompressor BlueEfficiency was a testament to what Mercedes-Benz could achieve when frugality and affordability were at the top of the agenda. I, for one, will miss it. 

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Alternative veneer and leather styles for Mercedes' new flagship limousine.

IT SHOULD HAVE been this way from the start, and in fact it almost was. When I photographed the Maybach prototype in 1999, the car proudly wore a Mercedes grille and three-pointed star, its bootlid sharing both Mercedes and Maybach script. It was obvious from its sheer physical size and presence that this car was the direct descendant of the mighty W100 Mercedes 600, the chosen ride of plutocrats and even the Pope through the glorious 1960s, 70s and 80s.

More fool the Mercedes marketing bods who listened to the exhortations of a few would-be buyers of their new uber-limousine, suggesting the three-pointed star had gone too far downmarket with the A-Class. These people indicated that they required complete brand differentiation before they would sign on the dotted line. A car solely bearing the family name of Carl Benz's partner, Wilhelm Maybach, was just what the doctor ordered.

For the 140-series S-Class based plutocrats' limousine, however, that single act of perceived exclusiveness was the straw that broke the camel's back. Millions were spent trying to revive a brand whose lineage had come to an abrupt halt in 1939, one that even the remaining few who harked from this era vaguely remembered.

From day one of the Maybach's relaunch in 2003, it quickly became apparent that listening

to those would-be customers had been a mistake. Production was wound down a decade later.

Meanwhile, revived under the stewardship of BMW around the same time, Rolls-Royce went from strength to strength. By the end of its last innings in 2013, barely 3,000 examples of the Maybach limousine in its 57 and 62 guises had been sold before the plug was unceremoniously pulled, and the 'MM' (Maybach Manufaktur) motif once again slipped quietly into obscurity.

NEW MEANING

Just a few days after the calendar turned over to welcome the world to 2015, I am being wafted along in the back of a new car wearing the Maybach motif on its C-pillars. As with the 1999 prototype, the new Mercedes-Maybach limousine confidently wears the Mercedes grille and three-pointed star on its nose.

This time round, the Mercedes-Maybach is being presented as a more upmarket version of the S-Class, 100,000 of which were sold in its first full year of production, equivalent to the sales figures of the Audi A8 and BMW 7-Series combined. This makes it the most successful Mercedes-Benz S-Class ever.

In terms of model designations, while the standard-wheelbase S-Class carries the designation W222, and the long-wheelbase version V222, the Mercedes-Maybach is called X222, with the forthcoming Pullman, due to arrive later this year, the Z222.

The wheelbase mix is very much market driven. The 130mm longer V222 is the default model in the USA and China. With a further 200mm added to the wheelbase of the V222 aft of the B-pillars, the new Mercedes-Maybach model is primarily aimed at the US, China, Korea and Russia, with only nine per cent of expected sales in Europe. Fittingly, the revived Maybach name now represents the luxurious sub brand of Mercedes in the same way that AMG is the high performance sub brand, thus giving the potential S-Class customer three distinct flavours of luxury to choose from.

However, unlike AMG, which covers the Mercedes range from A-Class to the AMG GT, the Maybach name will only be used with the

S-Class line (and possibly with an SUV) to maintain exclusivity. Incidentally, the bespoke trim choices above and beyond the already well appointed, basic Mercedes-Maybach specification come under the designo label.

The Mercedes-Maybach is available in 449bhp S500 V8 and 523bhp S600 V12 guises, the former equipped with the new 9G-Tronic nine-speed gearbox. There will be an S400 V6 version just for the Chinese market to mitigate local luxury taxes. Production starts in February, and the LHD only 4Matic version of the V8 model and the armoured Guard version will be available in the summer.

From an aesthetic point of view, good proportions are just for starters – the rear quarter

JUST THE FACTS



Mercedes-Maybach S600 (X222)

ENGINE	M275 5,980cc V12 biturbo
POWER	523bhp@4,900-5,300rpm
TORQUE	612lb ft@1,900-4,000rpm
TRANSMISSION	7-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT	2,335kg
0-62MPH	5.0sec
TOP SPEED	155mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION	24.1mpg
CO2 EMISSIONS	274g/km
YEARS PRODUCED	2015-on

Figures for car as pictured; fuel consumption NEDC combined; top speed limited



Unlike in the normal, LWB S-Class, both rear seats recline to 43.5 degrees.



△ Champagne flutes part of £7,300 First Class Cabin option.

▽ Burmester sound system standard on the new Maybach.



restyling for the Mercedes-Maybach S-Class derivative adds an even more regal aura to the most modern and dynamic looking luxury saloon in its class. As Daimler design chief, Gorden Wagener explained, "It is hard to design a car this long so that it does not look 'stretched'. We achieved aesthetic balance by extending the rear roofline and keeping it high, using a thicker C-pillar to re-proportion the rear and add privacy for occupants, and incorporating the triangular rear window and 66mm shorter doors."

These changes successfully compensate for the 200mm wheelbase stretch over the LWB S-Class that takes place aft of the B-pillars. The result, to my eyes at least, is the most handsome and modern looking, luxury limousine on sale today. In practical terms, I found that by almost completely missing the rear wheelarch, the new rear doors give the car an even more homogenous look while facilitating entry and exit.

Inside, the wheelbase stretch takes rear kneeroom from 166 to 325mm, and allows both rear seats to be reclined to 43.5 degrees, providing supreme comfort for two. The front

“THE NEW MERCEDES-MAYBACH IS THE QUIETEST AND MOST COMFORTABLE LIMOUSINE ON SALE TODAY BY A SIGNIFICANT MARGIN”

passenger seat can still be motored forwards for even more rear legroom on that side of the car. The finer grade of leather used in the car's sumptuous interior, and the lamb's wool overmats in the rear add a final touch of plush.

Speaking with Mercedes' aerodynamics chief, Dr Teddy Woll, whose team has gone the extra mile in NVH engineering techniques with the chassis and aero-acoustics, I learned that the new Mercedes-Maybach is the quietest and most comfortable limousine on sale today by a

significant margin. The fact that it is also less expensive than its rivals from Bentley and Rolls-Royce is an added bonus.

The drag coefficient is unchanged from the V222 S-Class at 0.26Cd, the benchmark for the S500 and S600 models with their larger radiator openings. Great attention was paid to panel gaps and other wind noise generating elements. Additional sound deadening materials were added to further reduce low and high frequency wind and road noise intrusion in the audible 1 to 6kHz range. Why? Simply because this is the area most pertinent to the human voice.

While the S-Class coupe is quieter up front than the saloon, the X222 Maybach is measurably quieter than the normal, long-wheelbase S-Class in the rear, in both subjective and objective terms, with less cabin noise than any rival luxury limousine at the benchmark 200km/h (124mph) on the autobahn.

QUIET COMFORT

Another sign of attention to detail shows up in the extra sound deadening material placed in salient areas on the body in white, to absorb vibrations at ear level when the rear seat



The Maybach is 5,453mm long, making it 207mm bigger than the normal, LWB S-Class.



“
THE NOTABLE ABSENCE OF TYRE AND WIND NOISE IN ALMOST
ALL CONDITIONS VINDICATES THE ENGINEERS' EFFORTS
”

▷ passengers are in the reclined position. Thus, I found the level of refinement totally consistent irrespective of the angle of recline I adopted during the test ride.

Meanwhile, the latest laminated glass techniques mean that the new Mercedes-Maybach achieves a 10 per cent reduction in noise through 3.5mm of glass over the 5mm glass of the previous model. The transcendental Burmester audio system that is such a worthwhile travelling companion in other S-Class models has received a software tweak to compensate for the larger cabin.

Extra weight helps to absorb vibrations with sheer mass, and the longer wheelbase, related panels and glass add around 50kg over the kerb weight of the equivalent S500 L or S600 L. However, by the time you add up the extra equipment you can count on 170kg over each of these base models. Thus, software recalibration is required for the suspension, ABS and ESP systems.

OTHERWORLDLY

I was able to confirm the car's supreme refinement while being chauffeured on a route that covered over all kinds of road surfaces in the Santa Barbara area. As California has been technically bankrupt for years, its roads are hardly better than the United Kingdom's, and the way the Mercedes-Maybach prevents external disturbances from reaching its occupants is most impressive.

The supple but well damped ABC active suspension with Magic Ride Control, which is standard on the normal S600 and optional on the Airmatic equipped V8 model, benefits from the Maybach's extra wheelbase length. This adds a further sublime component to the ride of a limousine whose rear seat comfort is already the class benchmark.



△ A car for those who love to sit back and enjoy the ride.



△ Large boot houses optional, refrigerated compartment.

However, the perception of gliding along in virtual silence does not come from a smooth ride alone. The engineers went to the extent of commissioning bespoke 19- and 20-inch tyres from Goodyear that incorporate sound absorbing material in their inner circumference that decrease tyre noise by as much as 10dB with 100Hz peaks, and in the critical 250 to 400Hz range at 60km/h (37mph).

This extra sound deadening belt, which has a 125x25mm cross section, adds 300g to each tyre and does not affect the rolling resistance, or the CO₂ output of the engine. Tyre sizes are 245/45R19 (front) and 275/40R19 (rear), or 245/40R20 and 275/35R20, and the winter tyre option uses 245/45R19 rubber all round.


The notable absence of tyre and wind noise in almost all conditions vindicates the engineers' efforts, adding to the sense that the car is simply gliding along in eerie silence as you work, relax or simply watch the outside world go by. Mercedes has even thought outside the box on the chauffeur/VIP interface.

Two microphones in the rear view mirror housing pick up the chauffeur's voice and pipe it through the car's audio system in the rear compartment. This clever system avoids the need for raised voices or head turning, contributing to both road safety and decorum. The control software subtly raises the volume with speed up to 120km/h (75mph), after which it gets no louder.

SOFTLY SPOKEN

As for the boot space occupied by the drinks cooler in any S-Class model, a word with S-Class Development chief, Dr Hermann-Joseph Storp, revealed that undoing two knurled securing knobs and disconnecting the power cable allows you to quickly remove the bulky power unit when maximum carrying capacity trumps cold champagne.

The basic Mercedes-Maybach S500 costs €154,000 in Germany, which is the equivalent of just over £116,000 – although this model is yet to be confirmed for the UK. Meanwhile, the S600 is pegged at €187,000, or £165,700 for the UK market, with deliveries starting in February.

It's true that the S500's long options list (UK S600s have most things as standard) means owners might not escape breaking the €200,000 (£151,000) threshold. But that price is still much lower than what Bentley and Rolls-Royce charge for their big limos. And even the Phantom cannot quite match the comfort and silence of the new Maybach. I would expect no less from the company that invented the motorcar. 

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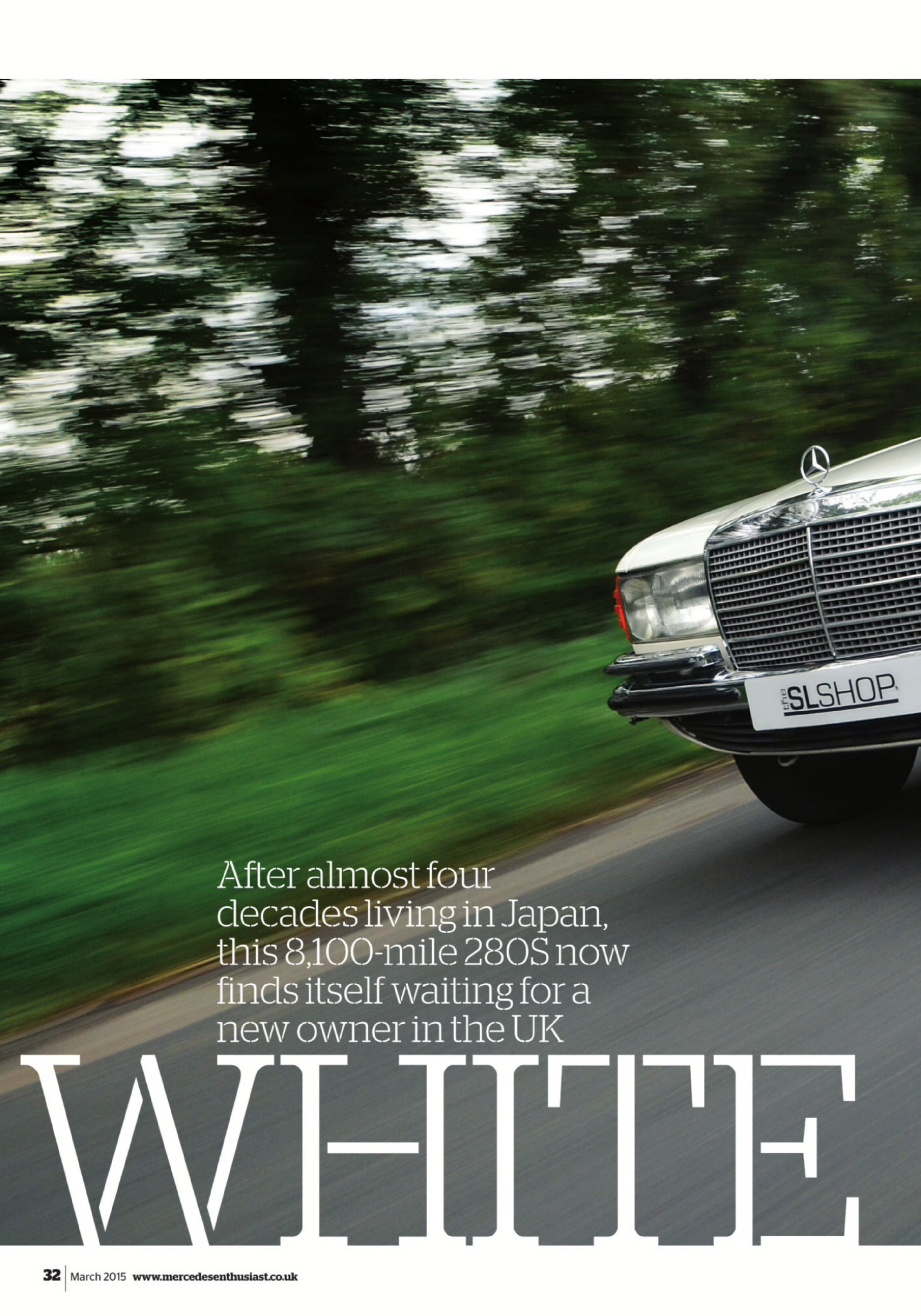


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After almost four decades living in Japan, this 8,100-mile 280S now finds itself waiting for a new owner in the UK

WHITE



CC A look in the remarkably clean engine bay reveals a second, Japanese chassis plate in addition to the Stuttgart original DD

WORDS
DAVID SUTHERLAND
IMAGES
TERRY OBORNE

GOLD



FOR

MOST westerners, Japan is not an easily accessible country, due to language and cultural barriers as

well as its sheer distance away. Among many other things, this means that while the millions of cars it exports around the world are an everyday sight, for most of us mystery surrounds the Japanese car business. There appear to be many models there that we do not see in the west and, from a foreigner's perspective, are oddly named too. Japanese type approval laws are different to those elsewhere, as can be cars' equipment specifications compared to export models.

The M110 engine gave a good account of itself in the W116

The Japanese market also has a strict and costly system for testing a car's roadworthiness, called *Shaken*, which sees many cars with an expired certificate exported to countries whose exchange rate makes such sales worthwhile. It is also not uncommon for European models, usually towards the premium end of the range, to be re-exported to Europe and elsewhere after years in Japan, and this stream includes a number of Mercedes, some unfamiliar sounding, for example the 124-series E400 AMG (*Mercedes Enthusiast* July 2009).

The 280S's power decreased slightly from January 1976 due to lower compression.



Every chromed surface survives with barely a hint of the previous 40 years.



These polished exhaust pipes are more evidence of a pampered existence.



The cabin still carries the distinct aroma of a new Mercedes-Benz - amazing!

Before being loaded into containers for their long sea voyage, in many cases cars are effectively stripped of their identity, and arrive at the port of entry with a sparse amount of paperwork, often no more than registration documents, in Japanese. It is for this reason that we are unable to explain why this W116, recently acquired by Mercedes specialist The SL Shop near Redditch, has spent almost 40 years in Japan, but has covered less than 13,000km, or some 8,100 miles, and is in as new condition.

DECADES OF DELIGHT

A look in the remarkably clean engine bay reveals a second, Japanese chassis plate in addition to the Stuttgart original, plus a Japanese branded battery. Otherwise, things look normal, the twin-cam, 2.8-litre straight-six

(M110), with its trademark enormous cam covers, drawing the eye. But wait – under the large, flat air filter nestles a single, downdraught carburettor, not the plumbing and injector housing for Bosch fuel injection, because this is the most basic 116-series S-Class you could buy, the 280S. Why a Japanese customer, no doubt paying a hefty price premium for a Mercedes-Benz, would specify this rather than a higher level model is another mystery with an explanation lost to time.

Indeed, the very existence of a carburettored S-Class – even though in the mid 1970s most cars were still carburettor fuelled – was because this was the era of the low powered Mercedes, a time when customers were expected to be, and largely were, delighted by the German car's many qualities other than performance (though 1975, when

this 280S came off the line, was the year the sledgehammer 450SEL 6.9 appeared).

In fact, the famously efficient, if not commensurately quiet and refined M110 engine gave a good account of itself in the W116. On the 116's launch in 1972, it produced a then healthy 158bhp and 166lb ft torque, both these reducing very slightly in early 1976 when the compression ratio was lowered. For comparison, the 280SE, which began life with electronically managed Bosch D-Jetronic fuel injection, gave only 24bhp and 10lb ft more, and even the smallest of the V8s, the 3.5-litre 350SE/SEL, could raise only a quarter more horsepower than the entry level S-Class.

Back in those days, some lowly Mercedes models posted acceleration times that would almost have been better measured by a calendar than a stopwatch, but these didn't include the 280S, which in automatic form made 62mph from standstill in a respectably brief 12.3 seconds, according to Mercedes-Benz (this may even have been a conservative claim),

JUST THE FACTS Mercedes-Benz 280S (W116)

ENGINE
M110 2,746cc 6-cyl
POWER
158bhp@5,500rpm
TORQUE
166lb ft@4,000rpm
TRANSMISSION
4-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,610kg
0-62MPH 12.3sec
TOP SPEED 115mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION
22.6mpg
YEARS PRODUCED
1972-1980

Figures for a 1975 car as pictured; fuel consumption determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 110km/h, 68mph) plus 10 per cent

▷ this pared to 11.5 seconds in the manual equipped car. The automatic's 115mph top speed was nothing to be ashamed of either.

At *Mercedes Enthusiast*, we often encounter classic models that are in pristine condition, usually following a restoration – but very rarely one that even still smells new. And we've never seen one this original from 40 years ago.

AROMATHERAPY

It starts when you pull open the still quite stiff doors to reveal the rich, mid blue velour, which has yet to collect its first stain or rip, and which exudes a subtle, virgin, velvety aroma.

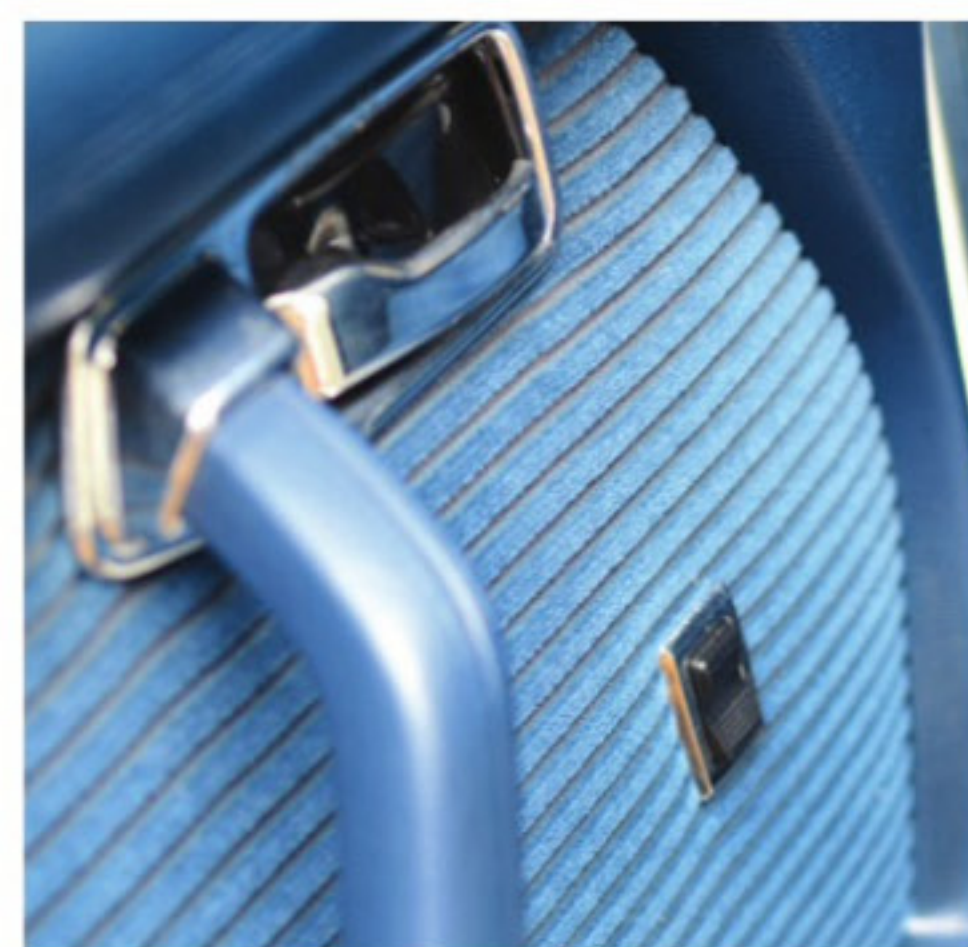
For me, the second delight is how comfortable the driver's seat is. I am used to flabby, weak sprung 116 seats, but these are supporting me almost like current Mercedes chairs. Pre 126-series S-Classes had only rudimentary seat adjustment, but I can achieve a wonderfully comfortable and commanding driving posture. Rounding off this particular pleasure is the large, proudly upright Mercedes-Benz star at the end of the bonnet, in full view rather than being partially hidden by the falling away leading edge of the nose, as is the case on the present models that still have the badge.

If you are wondering why a car sent to Japan – a right-hand drive country – is left-hand drive, this would almost certainly have been



△ These rear seats are for decoration only!

◁ Parking brake lever on left is unlike UK item.



▷ A pristine, velour finish on the doors.



For a car so large it handled impressively compared to most of its 1970s contemporaries



△ The SL Shop is asking £19,995 for this low mile, classic S-Class.

▷▷ Unused spare wheel wrapped in shiny 14-inch rubber.

▷ The speedometer reminds of Japan's 100km/h maximum.

▷▽ Four-speed auto for this six; V8s made do with a three-speed.



because despite the side of the road driven on, left-hand drive cars had extra kudos there. Different cultural values in Japan, remember.

In the rest of the 280S's cabin you see luxury of the austere kind. Aside from a full width strip of shiny wood veneer, all the fittings are plastic – but what glorious high mass polymer extrusions they are, looking tough, usable and long lasting, and so stylish. The instrument panel is neat and compact, and beautifully clear. The middle dial is the speedometer, and that to the left shows fuel, water temperature and oil pressure. Mercedes obviously considered that a rev counter would have been too racy for a 280S, so instead placed a clock in the third dial.

It's time to take this time capsule of a Mercedes out on the road, so the engine is fired up, Drive selected with the gearlever and the parking brake released. The brake is not the pull on, 'umbrella' handle you'll see at the extreme end of the fascia on UK spec 116s, but the 'rest of the world' configuration, of an additional pedal to the left of the brake pedal to engage it, and a small pull lever on the left of the fascia to release it. It soon becomes second nature, though I can't help but sympathise with the small number of people who bought manual 280S/SEs and then found hill starts a pain.

Perhaps no six-cylinder engine could have done the job in the 116 other than the M110 (a unit that saw service in all Mercedes model ranges during the 1970s and 1980s), given the mass requiring motivating. A firm right foot and plenty of revs is usually the best method, including even when taking off from standstill. The twin-cam is thankfully up for the challenge, responding rowdily and enthusiastically in the course of hauling the 1,610kg saloon. It helps that the autobox is four-speed, an advantage the sixes had over the three-speed V8s.

BACK TO THE PAST

But some aspects of the 116 are to be celebrated, not merely justified. For a car so large it handled impressively compared to most of its 1970s contemporaries, and still feels nimble enough provided you can do without tactile steering. The brakes are so efficient you barely give them a second thought, and the ride quality with compliant springs and high sided tyres on 14-inch wheels is restful.

In any other life, a base 116 with white paintwork might, after its early years, have found a second career as a wedding car before declining to a rusty, unmarked grave. But by a simple twist of fate this 280S, whose journey lengths on the high seas have comfortably exceeded its road miles, instead became a rare survivor of its breed. It is a gem – no other word adequately describes it.

► Thank you to **The SL Shop** for the car and the location **Tel** 01386 791069 **Web** theslshop.com

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THE DARK SIDE

This imposing 560SEL has a truly unique history, making it one of the most interesting examples we've seen

WORDS GUY BAKER
IMAGES CRAIG PUSEY





“Back in the day, if you
wanted the ultimate
S-Class then it had to be
the long-wheelbase
560SEL”



◁ A 560SEL makes quite the getaway car, should you need one.

▷ Gorgeous, 16-inch Penta alloys wheels with black centres.

▷▷ A few aftermarket touches signal this V8 limousine's intent.

▷▷▷ Powered windows and seats with built-in heaters.



JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz 560SEL AMG (V126)

ENGINE M117 5,547cc V8

POWER 296bhp@5,000rpm

TORQUE 336lb ft@3,750rpm

TRANSMISSION 4-speed auto, RWD

WEIGHT 1,830kg

0-62MPH 6.8sec

TOP SPEED 155mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 16.8mpg

YEARS PRODUCED 1985-1992

Figures for a standard, non catalyst, 1989 560SEL on which this car is based; fuel consumption according to EEC urban



FOR GENERATIONS, THE rich and powerful have been drawn to the S-Class. Reassuringly expensive, opulently appointed, technologically advanced and brilliantly built, Mercedes' range topping saloon has always had the ultimate status. And the Bruno Sacco designed 126-series was no different.

Back in the late 1980s, if you wanted the ultimate Mercedes-Benz S-Class then it had to be the long-wheelbase 560SEL – complete with darkened windows and your own driver. A car like this put you in the upper echelons of any society, but if you simply had to be top dog

then only a 560SEL breathed on by AMG would confer the necessary clout.

In those days, of course, AMG was still fiercely independent, providing bespoke cosmetic and engine upgrades for wealthy Mercedes owners. And this added to the AMG mystique. The asking price for its models varied considerably depending on how much AMG input had been requested, but few buyers would have paid less than £60,000 for the privilege of owning a 560SEL AMG. That's well over £100,000 in today's money – the asking price for the latest S63 AMG L.

Extrovert 126-series buyers were offered a variety of AMG modifications, including a choice of bodykits, transmission modifications

like a limited-slip differential and even a manual gearbox, plus different levels of engine tuning – with the DOHC six-litre V8 engine conversion the most well known – and various makes of TV and radio consoles, too.

AMG's customers were primarily the great and the good, but also included a handful of individuals whose businesses sometimes took them on the wrong side of the tracks. In Japan, the *Yakuza* (members of Japan's organised crime syndicates) were apparently extremely partial to these Mercedes models. As only a handful of people in Japan could afford to import these cars, they were seen as a serious status symbol and the owner could go about their business in the back seat, hidden away



This car is quite possibly the only 560SEL AMG left hooker in the UK

from public view. The highest status of all was reserved for six-litre models, and those in German market, left-hand drive form like the striking 1989 car you see here.

STATUS SYMBOL

Owned by enthusiast Manjit Krumbein – who bought the car from its first UK owner last year – this is quite possibly the only 560SEL AMG left hooker in the UK. It came to these shores in 2011, and has led a pampered life ever since, covering a mere 150 miles before Manjit became the proud owner in April 2014.

You can only imagine the impact this ominous looking 560SEL would have had 25 years ago in Japan, and even now it grabs

attention with both hands, wherever it goes. First you stare and then you look away as the fear factor cuts in. Who is behind the wheel? And what might they do if I offend them?



△ A Sony Trinitron TV opposite the front passenger seat.

Aside from the eye-catching Penta alloys and rear TV aerials, the list of external AMG add ons is extensive: the rare, pre merger, generation three bodykit comprises an AMG embossed ducktail, rear apron, side skirts and a front apron with foglights, and there's also an AMG embossed double-tip exhaust, AMG Bilstein suspension and zero chrome. At the time, Yanase was the only AMG agent in Japan, and the rear windscreen still has the original Yanase sticker, plus additional (and original, we are told) AMG stickers, whilst Manjit possesses the original Yanase leather key fob.

Dip into the leather clad interior and you'll also discover an AMG steering wheel, a gold tipped gearlever, a white backed instrument

Both performance and soundtrack are a league up on those of a standard 560SEL

▷ cluster, a Sony television facing the driver, black leather heated seats (for both front and rear passengers), black door cards, wood trim everywhere, plus air conditioning, a CD player with the original speakers, a sunroof, a rear electric blind and tinted rear windows.

Originality and provenance are key with a car like this, and Manjit's 84,000km (sub 53,000-mile) 560SEL still boasts plenty of Japanese and OE German labels. His car had clearly also transported Japanese children in a previous life, as he discovered a variety of Japanese market Pokémon toys under the rear seats and even a half used pack of Japanese baby wipes! And condition wise, this car is top notch, with almost perfect bodywork, an immaculate boot and no signs of rust anywhere.

Manjit (who lived in Germany until he was six years old) had been looking for a car like this for a few years, and eventually discovered this 560SEL on eBay. After passing muster, the car – which

lacked any corroborated history – went in for a comprehensive service and MOT, with Manjit perhaps fearing the worst. But, incredibly, all his SEL needed was a change of fluids and filters, and some new suspension bushes, surely a testament to the longevity of this jewel in the crown of classic Mercedes saloons.

Since then Manjit has splashed out on a new alternator and is also considering some larger,

silver AMG 'summer' alloys – we hope he sticks with those Pentas though, which are absolutely spot on for the period.

Slide behind the sizeable AMG steering wheel and the first thing that strikes you is the amount of interior space. The wide front seats could easily accommodate the brawniest of henchman, whilst the rear legroom would put a long-wheelbase Jaguar to shame.

BUILT TO BURBLE

At 5,160mm long and 1,820mm wide in standard form, navigating narrower streets takes care though, especially with the steering wheel on the left. But the combination of leather seats, acres of elbowroom, impressive sound deadening, a smooth four-speed automatic and easy low speed steering make for a relaxed urban drive. And cruising around town, you do get to enjoy other people's reactions.

But this is not just a limousine, it's a V8 muscle car that demands – when the situation allows – to be seriously



△ M117 V8 offered in six-litre form by AMG, this engine powering the illustrious Hammer models of the 1980s.



spanked. There are two options here: you can either increase throttle pressure gently, releasing a controlled flow of power, or you can step on the gas and enjoy the hooligan pleasures of brutal kickdown performance. Care to guess which option we preferred?

Whilst this car is sadly not the six-litre holy grail, it may well have enjoyed some pretty serious fettling from those resourceful engineers at AMG, because both performance and soundtrack are a league up on those of a standard 560SEL. Delivering a great shove of torque, this AMG version feels substantially quicker than the standard figures suggest, with the four-speed auto releasing the power pretty seamlessly. The steering, which does weight up at speed, is still a tad too light by contemporary sports car standards, but the braking and chassis stiffness are a real revelation – particularly for a car of this age and size.

Needless to say, this 560SEL is very much a Sunday car, I feel. And with fuel economy that usually hovers around 13mpg (and struggles to better 18mpg on a run) it has to be properly enjoyed, not just driven. Chauffeuring this mighty limo is an engaging and rewarding experience, but to gain the very most from the adventure, this Mercedes is perhaps best enjoyed from the back seat. ▷

△ Three-piece AMG ducktail spoiler no cheap find today.

△△ Much 'business' talk may have occurred in these parts, we reckon.

◁ Split rear aerials for the inbuilt Sony television system.

▽ There is a total lack of chrome on this long-wheelbase 116.



“For a model whose design is almost 40 years old, the SEL boasts an enviable reliability record”



▷ TAIL GUNNER

For a model whose design is almost 40 years old, the SEL boasts an enviable reliability record – largely as a result of its hewn-from-granite build quality. There are still perhaps a few hundred 126-series SELs on UK roads today. However, according to the last available Department of Transport figures, only around 90 are 560SELs.

And only a handful of these Mercedes-Benzes have been fettled by Affalterbach.

Buyers should seek out cars claiming a degree of originality – like Manjit's LHD example – to maximise residual value, and an impeccable history (either with Mercedes-Benz or a recognised specialist) is also essential.

A few minor creaks and groans are to be expected in a car of this age, but steer clear of any cars sporting rust – this is the main killer of older SE/SELs. Buyers must also make sure the self levelling suspension works and that there is no shimmy or body shake over bumps. A



△ Manjit bought this 560SEL in April 2014.

▷ Oil changes ensure the auto stays bulletproof.



complete air con failure can be expensive to fix these days, whilst dark colours with contrasting interiors are favoured by enthusiasts.

The market is actually fairly strong for SELs with excellent provenance, although prices can vary wildly from just £5,000 right up to £25,000, or even more. A collectable, top end AMG example with a low mileage is expected to appreciate substantially over the next few years – but only if fastidiously maintained.

Regular servicing every 6,000 miles is critical, and you must attend to any major maintenance issues quickly before related issues pop up and escalate costs. Known 126-series issues include timing chain wear (change it every 100,000 miles), camshaft wear caused by oil starvation, blocked injectors, leaking manifolds, blown OE fuses and tired HT leads.

Keep on top of all of these items, and rectify any rust straight away, just as Manjit intends to do with his commanding V8, and you will enjoy a long and happy life with your 126 S-Class. 🚗

► Thank you to **Midlands Classic Mercedes** (Web www.midlands-classic-mercedes.co.uk) and **MB Club UK** (Web www.mbclub.co.uk) for their help with this feature

If beauty is only skin deep...



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..... |
***"There are three pedals,
but not in the order you
would expect"***
..... |

Physical attraction

*Motorcars were not always as effortless to drive as they are today – we head to **South Africa** to experience a **Benz 10/30hp**, a car **predating** the unification of **Daimler-Benz***

WORDS WILHELM LUTJEHARMS
IMAGES CHARLES RUSSELL



I'm off in first gear

– barely at jogging speed – but, for the first time in my driving life, I'm rather scared of changing into second gear. The problem is, I can't keep the car in first gear, as it would take hours to drive to our planned destination. This car is the oldest – and one of the most intimidating – I've ever driven...

All those inspirational posters that say, "It is not about the destination but the journey", have a point, but I can't stay in first gear for the next three miles. With a high level of trepidation, I press the clutch pedal and try (rather unsuccessfully) to blip the throttle and pull the long, vintage gearlever backwards. After a second or two of clatter-clacking, everything comes together and second gear is engaged.

Now I need to build up confidence for third gear (I can already feel the sweat droplets forming on my brow). The thing is, you need to press the throttle after you have engaged the clutch to make the gear change process as slick as possible. This is one of the many challenges of early cars such as this Benz 10/30hp, which don't have a synchromesh gearbox.

Apart from that, I need to stay focussed. There are three pedals, but they do not operate things in the order you would expect; the clutch and the throttle pedal have been swapped around. I remind myself of this configuration constantly and, fortunately, I never get it wrong. It is not all smooth sailing, though. As we slowly make our way up the spectacular mountain pass in South Africa's Southern Cape region, I only realise when we arrive at the turnaround point that I have driven the entire distance with the handbrake lever engaged. Embarrassment engulfs me, and not just because the owner was sitting right next to me the whole time!

It is on the return downhill, with second gear selected and a light application on the brakes, that the drivetrain's characterful whine is most noticeable. In the distant past, I suppose one was only too happy not to have to walk to your destination, and this mechanical noise was preferable to the sound of a horse's hooves. These were pretty much my thoughts every time I climbed behind the wheel of this 1913 Benz – a car produced a good 13 years before Daimler-Benz was officially founded.

NO HORSE REQUIRED

As I sit behind the wheel, I ask the owner about each of the gauges and controls. These include a speedometer on the far left, and even a neat interior lamp to illuminate some of the gauges at night. The centre of the steering wheel also offers a throttle lever, fulfilling a similar function to the cruise control system of modern cars. And you can even increase your speed by turning this throttle lever in a clockwise direction. Each of these controls is made from brass or copper, and for a moment I cannot help but think of the bridge of the RMS Titanic. After all, that majestic ship collided with an iceberg just one year before this Benz 10/30hp rolled off the production line.

It is important to remember that this was an era when the manufacturing of motorcars was not as complicated as it is now. Unlike today, when manufacturing is mostly done by massive global companies, during the first decades of automotive manufacturing there were around 4,000 different companies (and individuals) who tried their hand at the business of building cars. The year 1913 was also the last year companies and countries could focus fully on motor manufacturing before the start of World War One in 1914. Following the onset of the war, both Benz and Mercedes would change their focus to building military vehicles and aeroplane engines.

It is understandable why these early cars were still frowned upon by the general public. Firstly, they made a lot of noise, and if you were used to the relaxing, clip-clop soundtrack of horse riding, the noise pollution of these cars would easily disrupt an entire village upon its arrival.

.....
"This car was produced a good 13 years before Daimler-Benz was officially founded"
.....



▷ Cruise control, of a sort, for this 102-year old Benz carriage.



△ Ambient interior lighting has come a long way since 1913.

JUST THE FACTS

Benz 10/30hp

ENGINE	2,610cc 4-cyl
POWER	30bhp@1,750rpm
TRANSMISSION	4-speed manual, RWD
CHASSIS WEIGHT	960kg
TOP SPEED	44mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION	16.6-18.8mpg
YEARS PRODUCED	1912-1914

Figures for a Benz 10/30hp open body

▷ Indeed, this is the first motorcar I've driven in which you can truly sense the historical connection with a horse-drawn vehicle. Although the cloth roof is in place, when it is removed the car closely resembles a carriage. Walk around this Benz and it is the details that grab your attention, such as the little brass light at the rear illuminating the numberplate, the copper (!) exhaust pipe, and the fuel tank that is there for everyone to see. There is even beading between the rear wheelarches and the bodywork of the cabin. The two spare tyres are positioned next to the driver, and the wheels have so many spokes I don't even want to contemplate counting them – or cleaning them!

BRASS GRAND

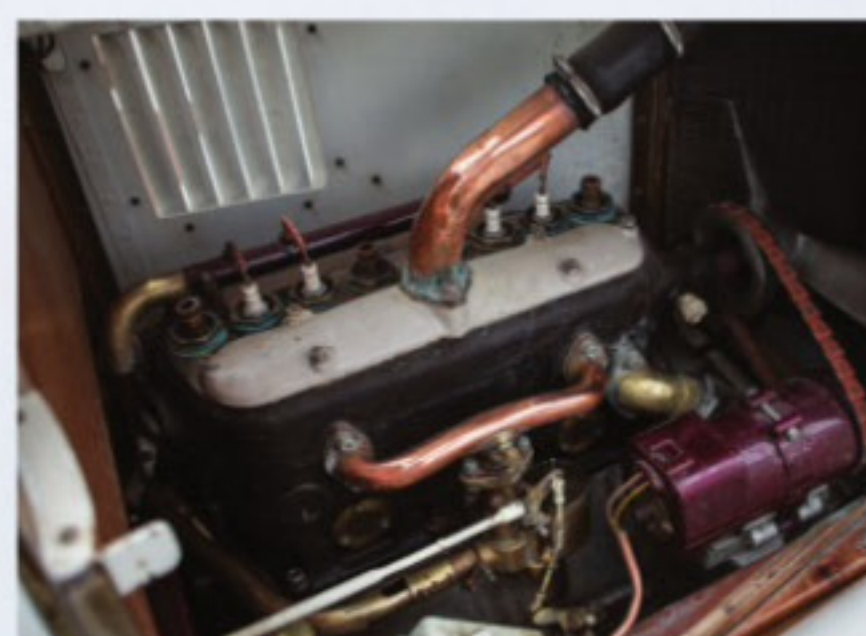
At the front, the angled radiator (no grille in front of it) was a well known Benz feature at the time. The headlights are situated above



◁ A fabulous and very robust looking toolkit accompanies this car.



△ Intricate belt design for the four-stroke's heavy cooling fan.



△△ The motor has one lateral cam, and a bore/stroke of 80x130mm.

the single spotlight and the hooter. If you feel brave, you can still start the engine manually by using the crank handle. Fortunately, this car's owner has added an electrical system, which connects a button next to the steering wheel with the engine. Thus equipped, it only takes a push of this switch to start the car.

Don't forget the toolbox attached to the side steps. In it you will find a comically big spanner, required to loosen or fasten the centre wheel nut. Rear seated passengers can easily become

comfortable and stretch out their legs without touching the front seats, although comfort is somewhat hindered by the breeze that whips around the cabin when the roof is lowered.

The owner of this car is a passionate Mercedes-Benz collector. His collection spans a good few models starting with this 1913 Benz, up to a 1984 Mercedes-Benz W123 200 with only 6,000

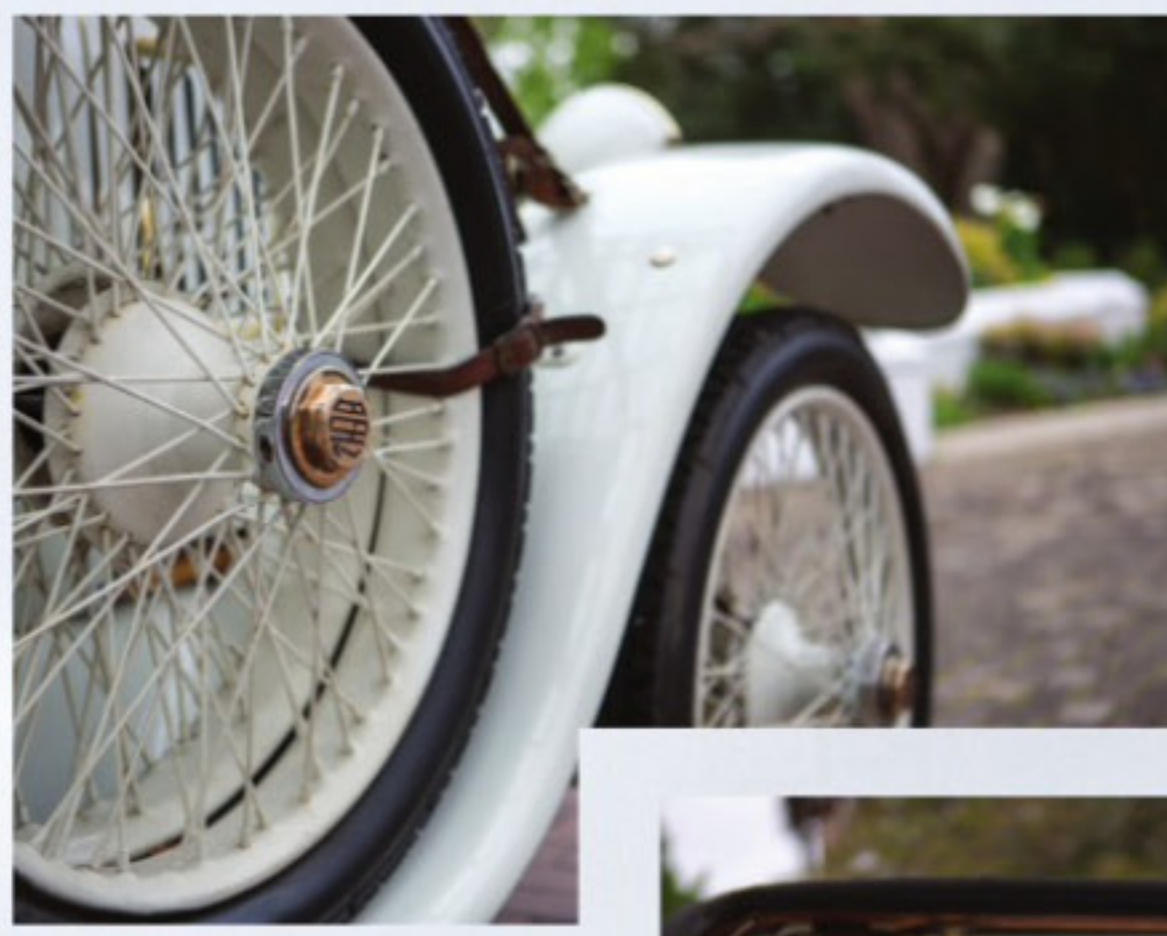


▷ The Benz's wire spoke wheels themselves are truly a sight to behold.

miles on the odometer! The 1913 Benz formed part of an automotive auction in 2000. There were obviously several other cars on offer, but the owner had his heart set on this specific example. Fortunately, the car was basically in the condition you see on these pages. However, although the car has lived in South Africa since the 1930s, it was at one stage in pieces scattered around a yard. It was around this time that two enthusiasts found it and rebuilt it.

Over the years a few things needed some attention. The cloth roof was overhauled, and so was the 2.6-litre, four-cylinder engine. The latter work is evident from the way the two-valve motor idles perfectly while I chat to the owner. For a car that is just over 100 years old, it is in exceptional condition.

There is an interesting twist to the early life of this Benz, though. On the left-hand side of the car, there is a brass plate showing that the body was manufactured by 'Carosserie H. Buhne' in Berlin. After some research, the owner discovered that this company was only founded *after*



△◁ It is believed that 'Carosserie H. Buhne' created this car's body.

△ Long leather straps keep the fabric top securely in place.

World War One. This means that the body of this car was redone after it left Benz in 1913. Could it be that the car might have been used during the war and needed refurbishment afterwards? And to whom did it belong?

Questions without answers.

The plaque may also explain why this particular car only has a single door, while other similar models had three doors, meaning the driver must enter the Benz via the front passenger side. Hardly an ideal first date car, then.

A BENZ REBORN

As we head back to the owner's residence, I'm slightly more relaxed and have time to focus on the quality of the ride. With such a thin wheel and tyre combination (815x105) ▷



.....
"The challenge is managing the car's speed, particularly when going downhill"

..... |
***"It comes from
a time when
people still
needed to fully
grasp the
concept of a
self powered
carriage"***
..... |



▽▽◁ No surprise to find sturdy looking leaf springs on this Benz.

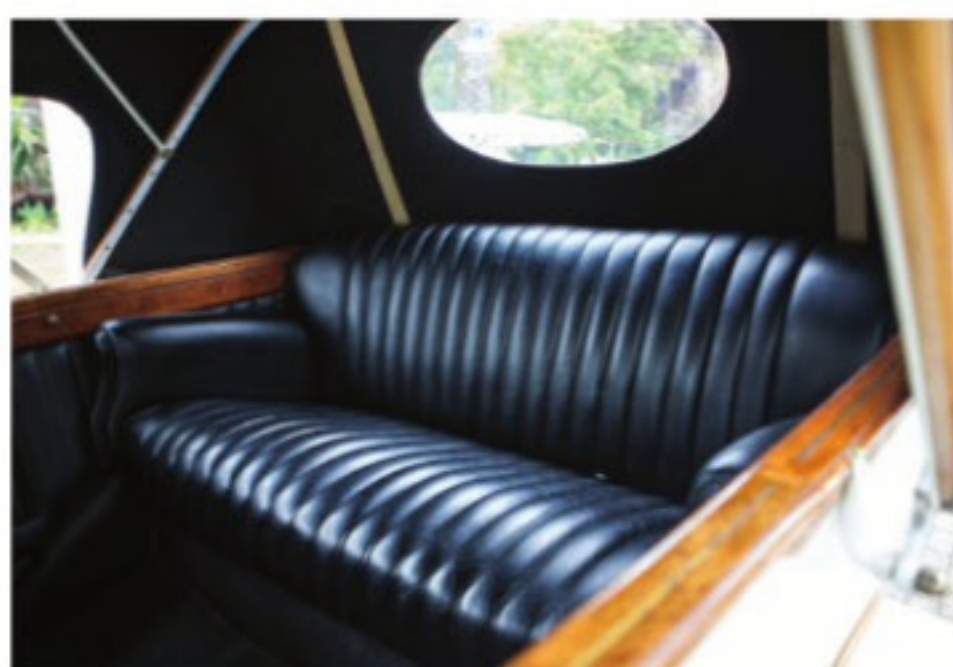
▽◁◁ You would be happy with this grand chair in your living room.

▽◁ Manual starting is unnecessary thanks to an electrical upgrade.

▷ 6 ply tyres front and rear) I expected a bumpy and choppy ride, but that is not the case – the leaf spring suspension certainly absorbs some bumps better than I had anticipated.

Once the car is moving, it can be steered easily by means of the thick, wood steering wheel. Parking at low speed is a different matter, however. Fortunately for drivers in the first half of the 20th century, three-point turns and parallel parking were not so important. At higher speed, the steering wheel becomes ever so slightly heavier when you turn away from the centre position, but that hasn't put off this car's owner, who has taken the Benz on several runs spanning more than 50 miles and the best part of a few hours to complete. The challenge is managing the car's speed, particularly when going downhill, as there are only drum brakes at the rear and no brakes up front.

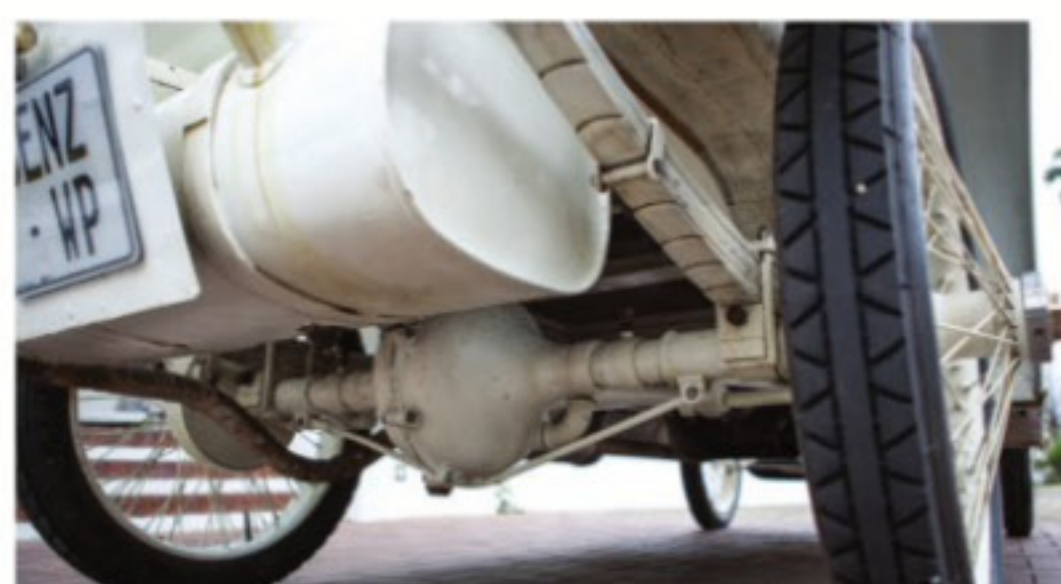
It is understandable why, for some enthusiasts, cars such as this 1913 Benz might seem slightly less appealing than



Mercedes' later creations. After all, the cars from the 1920s and 30s are more practical and usually take less effort to drive. However, the rarity factor is definitely part of this car's appeal. One 10/30hp model, which was restored, came up for sale a few years ago at the prestigious Auto Salon Singen showroom on the border between Germany and Switzerland. The price was a substantial €259,000.

TIMES CHANGE

High value aside, piloting this car was such an illuminating experience. It comes from a time when people still needed to fully grasp the concept of a self powered carriage. It was a time when nobody could have known, or predicted the future of these remarkable vehicles, and a time when driving a road car required great physical exertion – such actions unlikely ever to be needed again.





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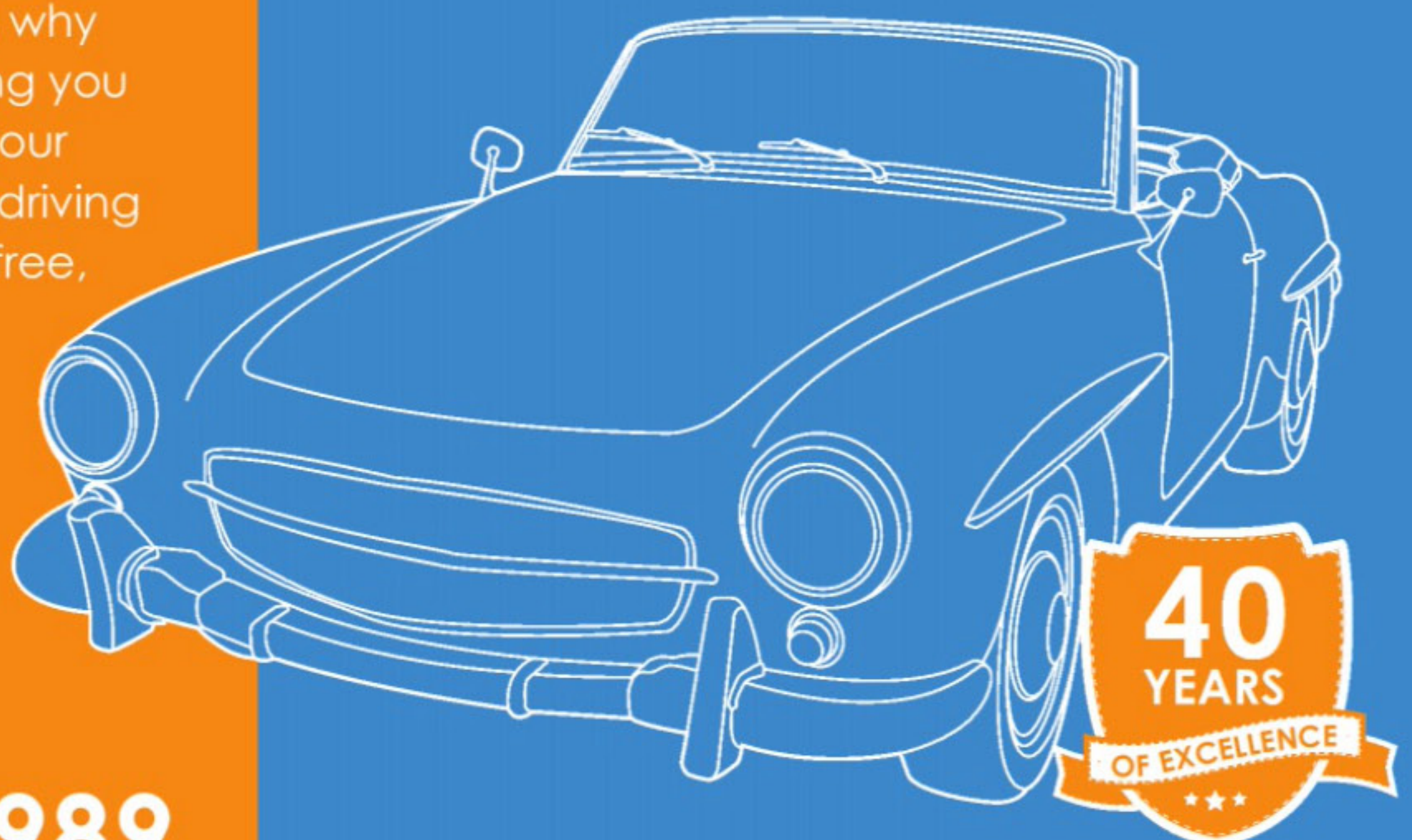
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Cover
story

A night at the opera

The ultimate
SLS AMG is not
the Black Series,
nor is it the race
version with
championships
to its name –
it is this one-off
GT3S built for
a loyal Dutch
customer of AMG

WORDS AND IMAGES
STEVE HALL



“The ‘S’ part of its moniker – standing for ‘Special’ – could hardly be more apt”



It's 11:15 on the morning of June 27 2014. My hearing seems to have departed, a shattering noise having stunned my eardrums into momentary dysfunction. The reason for the departure of my aural faculties is the orange wedge that you see on these pages. And if the date seems familiar to you, that's because it was the opening day of hillclimb action at last year's Goodwood Festival of Speed.

I was as surprised as anyone to discover this mighty SLS utterly dominating its space in the Supercar Paddock, it's magnetic properties drawing crowds inexorably toward it. It takes a special kind of car to relegate a Black Series SLS to second place in the attention stakes, and this was it.

Closing in to pore over every detail (and there are a lot of cool details on this car), I found myself peering through the 18-inch centre lock front wheel at the huge Brembo at the same moment its custodian for the weekend – Senior Driving Specialist for Mercedes-Benz and AMG Driving Academy Instructor, Elliott Cole – flicked the ignition toggle to 'On' and hit the start button.

With the side exit exhaust barely an arm's length away, my ears didn't stand a chance. If you've ever watched a GT3 or VLN race, then you'll understand what I mean; the GT3 spec M159 V8 explodes into life with a raucous, offbeat rumble, before settling to a hard edged blare that's more Messerschmitt than Mercedes-Benz. With engine revolutions, the exhaust pulses smooth out and combine to deliver fantastically aggressive V8 thunder. This gullwinged supercar certainly proved a crowd pleaser on the 1.2-mile driveway outside Lord March's house...

So just how did a car which makes no appearance in the official 2014 entries catalogue find itself in the paddock, helping say goodbye to the SLS AMG in some style? The

“With the side exit exhaust barely an arm's length away, my ears didn't stand a chance”

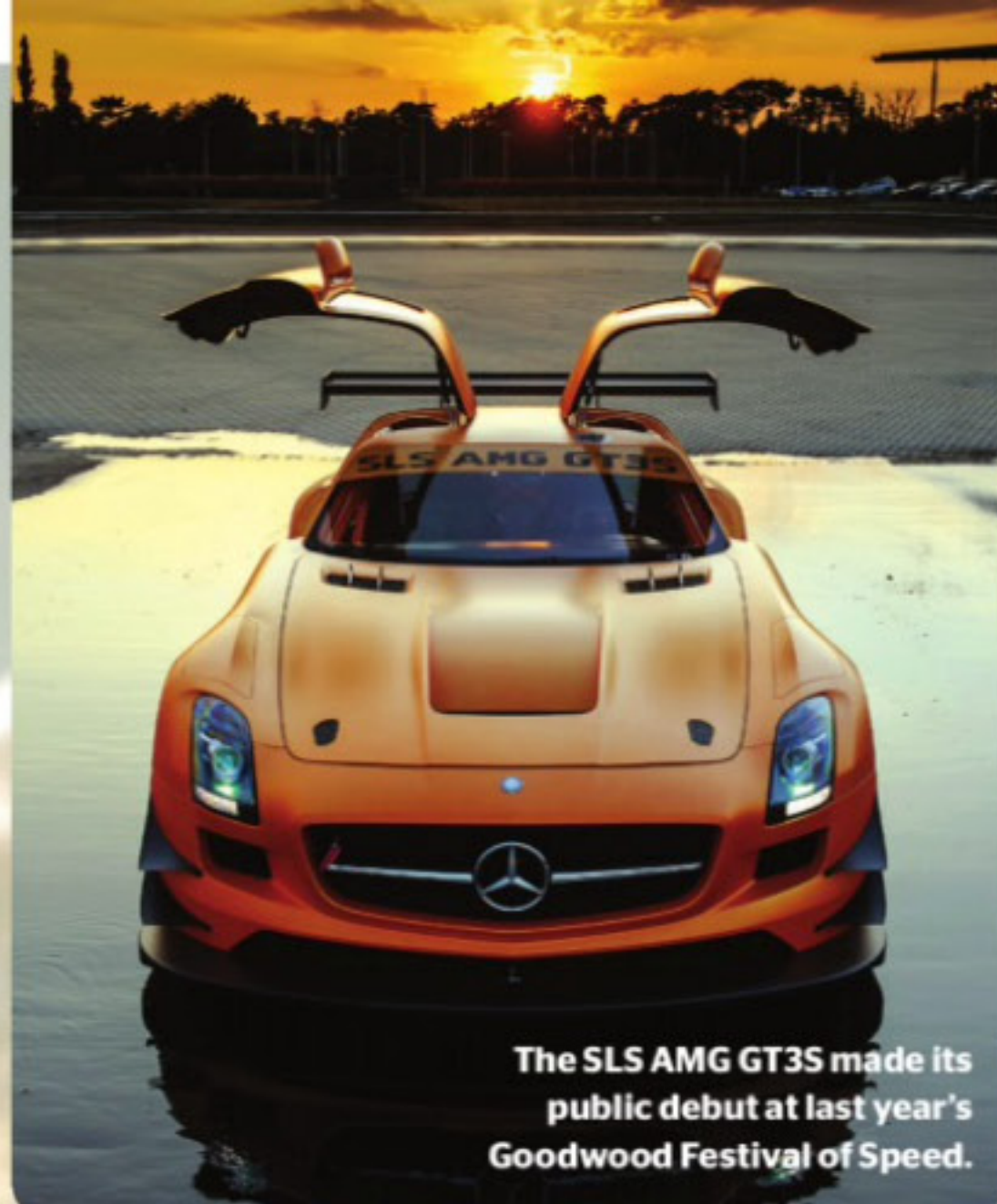
simple truth is that the car was never certain to make its date with Sussex's favourite hillclimb event – build dates and Goodwood's schedule leaving little margin for manoeuvre, so the car was left off the entry list.

Happily, everything worked out just so, and this unique SLS AMG GT3S headed down to the start line for the opening day of hillclimb action bang on schedule. If ever the phrase 'baptism of fire' was appropriate. As driver Cole put it, "I took the first run fairly conservatively, as I was very aware that the car had not even fired up until the Friday morning, much less been driven in anger at one of the largest automotive events in the world."

The next snippet gives an insight into the mind of the owner. Upon the car's return to the pits, he was enthused to canvass Cole's thoughts on his prized one-off's performance, to which Cole replied, "Yes,



This SLS is based on the rare '45th Anniversary' edition of the SLS AMG GT3 racing car.



The SLS AMG GT3S made its public debut at last year's Goodwood Festival of Speed.

unbelievable." The response? "Well, then you must push!" You have to take your hat off to that kind of attitude, and Cole certainly took the opportunity to do the car justice, performing rolling burnouts, launches, and generally offering as much noisy entertainment as possible for the Goodwood crowds.

As a long time friend of Mercedes-Benz (the kind who purchases multiple Maybachs and special AMGs), the owner had an agreement in place to send the GT3S to Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey for a few weeks after the traditional Goodwood event – and it was here we were able to spend a thoroughly enjoyable evening photographing and getting to know this stunning SLS.

The genesis of the beast comes from the Dutch owner's invite to view the SLS AMG GT3 '45th Anniversary' edition back in 2012. Here was a collector's special derived from the standard GT3 racing car, finished in the same designo Magno Graphite matte paint which had until then been exclusive to the SL65 AMG 45th Anniversary unveiled at the New York motor show in January 2012, to celebrate 45 years of the increasingly successful Mercedes-AMG partnership.

On the passenger side, a seat shell in a high strength, carbon fibre safety cell was installed, perfect for sharing your fun. The remainder of the package was cosmetic with that special paint to be found on some interior parts along with a smattering of badges to denote the limited nature of this SLS – only five were sold, for the cool sum of €446,250 including 19 per cent VAT (around £350,000). Ostensibly a track special, no doubt some are destined to sit in dehumidified garages.

Not our guy, though – he wanted something even more special:

a one-off, painted in the vibrant orange of his native flag, and lacking the air restrictor which motorsport rules would otherwise dictate. Thus equipped, we find ourselves with probably the ultimate trackday special that

AMG could create – a proven GT3 spec car, with a fully integrated passenger seat and the full potential of the magnificent 6.2-litre V8 unleashed. The 'S' part of its moniker – standing for 'Special' – could hardly be more apt. And if the price tag may be equally special to match, this is no garage queen; after leaving Mercedes-Benz World, it returned to Europe and has seen plenty of track action.

So what is the car like to drive up the hill at Goodwood? Over to Elliott Cole for some impressions. "To say the SLS GT3S is a pleasure to drive would be an understatement. At the Festival of Speed, I was lucky enough to run up the hill in both the SLS Black Series and the GT3S on consecutive days, and whilst they are both breathtaking cars, the sense of occasion strapping into the GT3S is like nothing I've ever experienced from a non racing car.

"The Black Series is a work of art, but the GT3S is something else. It sets itself apart with well over 600bhp, side exiting exhausts and a six-speed [sequential] race transmission, as well as the aerodynamic addenda you recognise from the standard SLS GT3. There is no refinement inside, with beautiful exposed carbon throughout and all of the safety equipment you'd be at home with on the grid.

"Once I'd navigated my way around the supercar paddock and down to the start line ▷



“We fire up and the whole car becomes a buzzing noise chamber”

▽ A normal GT3 race car runs with air restrictors – but not this example!

▽ Side exiting exhausts, unlike the road going version of the SLS AMG.

▽▽ Slick tyres wrapped around 18-inch alloys and Brembo brakes.



▷ [easier said than done when the GT3S has a steering lock of just a few degrees], I got everything I'd wished for when the start marshal waved me off the line for the first run on Friday. The rear tyres lit up at the flick of the accelerator pedal, and in just a few seconds I was into Turn 1.

“In terms of pushing the GT3S to the limit, you are only ever operating at 80 per cent, leaving something in reserve to use at the right time, but during the moments I did start to lean on the GT3S, I could easily have thought I was in the race car on a qualifying lap,” Cole explains, “The feedback, the ground effects, the steering inputs, none of it lends itself to a road car, and the only stark reminder that you have from behind the wheel is the indicator stalk sitting out of place behind the steering wheel.”

Not afraid to use it properly. It's a phrase that keeps coming to mind the more I hear about this car, and the way Mercedes has been able to share it for our viewing (and listening) pleasure. Happily, this also extends to us venturing out onto the 1.6-mile ribbon of track in front of the Brooklands complex, to get some dynamic moving shots. Of course, I sneaked a chance to experience just a tiny slice of what it's like by jumping into the passenger seat between photographs. You just would, wouldn't you?

I'm struck first of all by the beautifully wrought cabin. Being a track focused car, it's naturally devoid of any comforts (bar a pair of air vents jutting out at face level), but the cabin has such a sense of purpose, no doubt aided by the acres of

carbon fibre. There's a plethora of chunky switches (so gloved hands can operate with ease), a tiny Alcantara wrapped steering wheel with neatly shaped paddleshifters, and a trio of pedals with high grip finishes tucked down in the footwell – the clutch only necessary for pulling away. It certainly sets the scene.

We fire up and the whole car becomes a buzzing noise chamber. First gear feels incredibly long as we get rolling, and a short squirt of throttle down the back straight unleashes the pent up tension, V8 rumble competing with rising transmission whine – and winning. Although we only use two gears, the sense of immediacy and the intensity of the acceleration are enough to provide just a hint of what the GT3S would be like on a fast, open track: spellbinding.

If there's a lot of carbon on the inside, we're hardly short of it on the outside, too: massive wing, engine bay, doors – in fact the majority of the painted external panels are carbon reinforced composite. And just look at it. The sensational choice of shade offsets all those external details beautifully. I think it's fair to say you'd be thrilled every time you opened the garage to find this wedge of orange staring back at you, a thrill surpassed only by the driving experience. Could there be a better last hurrah for the glorious M159 V8 and SLS AMG? I doubt it.

► Thank you to **Mercedes-Benz World** for its help with this feature **Web** mercedes-benzworld.co.uk
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SPOTLIGHT SLS AMG GT3S



△ The digital instrument cluster has everything a racing driver needs.

△△ Clutch pedal used only for pulling away from a standstill.

△△ Bare carbon fibre and metal on show in the fabulous cabin.



UK DRIVE

BETTER TOGETHER

Costing just over £2,600 more than a conventional C250 Bluetec, we find out if the diesel-electric C300 Bluetec Hybrid is worth the extra outlay

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

THIS C300 BLUETEC HYBRID saloon does not represent the future – it is very much part of the present. Priced from £35,045 (the estate model starts at £38,240) and fitted with a seven-speed automatic gearbox as standard, the combination of a four-cylinder biturbo diesel engine and an electric motor makes it the most frugal new C-Class you can buy. Better still, it's also the fastest accelerating W205 you can buy in the UK that doesn't come from AMG. Consider the cake scoffed!

In the right environment, according to Mercedes-Benz, you can achieve 83.1mpg on a run and 72.4mpg through town, with CO₂ emissions as low as 94g/km when rolling on the 16-inch wheels of SE spec (not available on the estate). Fit the 17-inch alloys of the Sport trim line pictured (from £37,040) and emissions creep up to 95g/km, the 18s of AMG Line (£38,535) nudging CO₂ levels a whisker shy of 100g/km. Only the optional 19-inch wheels go beyond this critical point at which road tax applies after the car's first year, eventually bringing a (hardly expensive) £20 bill to your door for the car's 104g/km CO₂ output.

All this will be music to the ears of company car buyers. Taking this C300 Bluetec Hybrid Sport as an example, it carries a benefit in kind rating of just 12 per cent, which is far lower than the 20 per cent BIK of a similarly priced and equally powerful rival from Bavaria, and six per cent lower than a conventional, equivalent C250 Bluetec which carries the same diesel engine.

But let's stop the number crunching for now, and see what else this car offers. The W205 has been with us for a year, but the cabin still feels like a breath of fresh air with leather, metal and glossy trim in every place that matters. I try my best not to, but I can't help feeling rather smug cocooned in such luxury. I've had a similar impulsion before, but it involved five-star accommodation on the edge of Barcelona, with the most exquisitely decorated▷





***“It’s the fastest
accelerating
W205 you can
buy that
doesn’t come
from AMG”***

▷ lift (or elevator for those readers in the USA) that I have ever seen. But I digress...

Although sitting you nicely square behind the steering wheel, I never quite felt low enough in the previous generation C-Class, despite whirring the driver's chair to its most southerly position. No such problem exists in Mercedes' latest compact executive saloon, however, the higher set dashboard and door tops allowing you to feel truly within the surrounding opulence, and even better protected.

With Agility Control suspension featuring five driving modes, the C-Class treads lightly or purposefully depending on your chosen disposition, the adaptive damping making it feel more mature and more handy through bends than the W204, which was already well regarded.

NO WASTAGE

In a nutshell, the C300 Bluetec Hybrid employs Mercedes' stalwart 2,143cc biturbo diesel, in 201bhp/369lb ft torque form, and supplements it



△ LEDs at the rear of all 205-series C-Classes.

▽◁ This is the optimum set up for saving fuel.

▽▷ A 5.5-inch TFT screen splits the stylish dials.

▽▽ There is much to love in the C's cabin.

with an electric motor that is attached to the gearbox and capable of delivering an extra 27bhp. A highly efficient lithium-ion battery (located near the fuel tank) provides the electric energy, and is recharged every time you touch the brake pedal. Both this recuperation and the use of the electric motor are represented in a small gauge below the rev counter. So cleverly packaged is the hybrid system, the C300's 435-litre boot capacity is a barely discernable 45 litres down on other C-Class saloons.

We have tested this set up before in the E-Class and found it very good at eking out every last drop of fuel. Given that the 1,715kg C300 Bluetec Hybrid saloon weighs a full 130kg less than the E-Class (but 120kg more than a C250 Bluetec), you'd be right to assume even greater potential for electric only running.

Driving the diesel-electric C-Class makes you aware of just how inefficient the average car is. Some may kill their engines when stationary, but almost all continue to keep their motor running



JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz C300 Bluetec Hybrid (w205)

ENGINE OM651 2,143cc 4-cyl biturbo + electric motor

POWER 201bhp@3,800rpm + 27bhp

TORQUE 369lb ft@1,600-1,800rpm

TRANSMISSION 7-speed auto, RWD

WEIGHT 1,715kg

0-62MPH 6.4sec

TOP SPEED 152mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION 78.5mpg

CO2 EMISSIONS 95g/km

YEARS PRODUCED 2014-on

Figures for car as pictured; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined

when you are slowing down. With the C300 Bluetec Hybrid, engine overrun is a thing of the past. With all systems fully active (which usually only takes a few minutes after starting the car from stone cold), as soon as you move your foot away from the accelerator pedal the revs fall to zero.

At this point you have three options depending on the road ahead. The first is to press the brake pedal to slow down and recharge the battery. The second is to take control of the electric motor by gently repressing the throttle, to maintain and even speed up progress. The final option is to press the throttle with more force and reawaken the engine with barely a vibration.

In practice, every journey becomes an opportunity to exploit the electric potential of the powertrain. And, as I found with the E-Class, I never stopped learning how to get the best from the diesel-electric system, kicking myself every time I failed to spot a

red traffic light in the far distance and kept the engine alive for longer than necessary.

With its lesser weight, you can use the C-Class's electric motor more often than the E-Class's, and even coax the car up a slight incline in stop-start traffic – the environment in which the hybrid drive system truly excels.

Low speed manoeuvres can also be executed with no input from the turbodiesel engine whatsoever, and for those potential buyers worried that their neighbours will think they have bought a milk float, the C300 Bluetec Hybrid refuses to emit a stereotypical electric hum sound when in full save-the-Earth mode. In this respect, silence has never been more satisfying.

So what are our eco findings in the field? A sticky issue is the fact they are not really comparable with the official figures (72.4mpg urban, 83.1mpg extra urban, 78.5mpg NEDC combined), but in relation to the E300 Bluetec Hybrid and a C250 Bluetec saloon ▷

“The C300 Bluetec Hybrid employs Mercedes’ stalwart biturbo diesel and supplements it with an electric motor”



ROAD TEST C300 Bluetec Hybrid


▷ without an electric motor on board, they are very interesting indeed.

A gentle 25-mile trundle on main A-roads achieved 64mpg, which then refused to drop below 62mpg on a faster motorway cruise with the diesel engine playing its subdued thrum more often. There were moments when electric propulsion could be deployed on the motorway, but it was the shutting down of the engine when coming off the throttle that appeared to make the difference.

WHERE IT COUNTS

So far, so relatively predictable for this heavier than average, diesel powered saloon, you might think. But around busy towns with traffic often crawling at a snail's pace, the C300 Bluetec Hybrid properly demonstrated its advantage over a regular C-Class diesel, hitting an average of 61.4mpg on my urban commute to Sundial Towers thanks to constant use of the electric motor. I would have been lucky to see 40mpg without electric assistance, and saw no better than 49mpg in the heavier E-Class hybrid in similar conditions. Another run going the

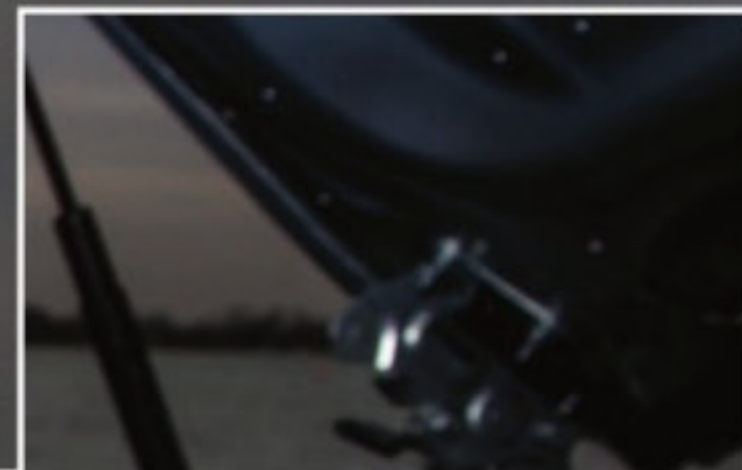
other way yielded 56.5mpg, a necessary burst of the good stuff to beat a huffing and puffing cyclist curtailing my aspirations that time.

To conclude then, with several days of experience under my belt, the C300 Bluetec Hybrid appears most effective on slower and busier roads, where it puts clean air between itself and the regular diesels. A beefier electric motor, larger graphics to monitor its usage, and some haptic feedback through the throttle pedal would undoubtedly improve the package further still. But for its first attempt at a diesel-hybrid C-Class, Mercedes-Benz has done a sterling job indeed. Who would have thought driving to save every last drop of fuel could be so rewarding? 



△ Sport spec includes these 17-inch alloys.

▽ A 2.1 diesel and a 27bhp electric motor.



“Every journey becomes an opportunity to exploit the electric potential of the powertrain”



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2007 SLK200K, auto, one lady owner, silver, 56k, FMSH. **£9,794**



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2011(61), saloon, 7G-Tronic Plus, 25,000 miles, Fire Opal Red **£19,995**



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2012(62), coupe, 7G-Tronic Plus, 25,000 miles, Polar White **£22,295**



SLK 280 (3.0 - V6) Paddleshift
2008(08), roadster, 7G-Tronic, 49,000 miles, Tellurite Silver **£11,495**



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2010(60), 4x4, 7G-Tronic, 57,000 miles, Tenorite Grey **£19,995**



Skoda Superb SE CRTDI (170)
2011(11), hatchback, 6 Speed - Manual, 54,000 miles, Brilliant Silver **£9,995**



BMW X3 2.0d xDrive M Sport
2009 (09), 4x4, 6 Speed - Manual, 80,000 miles, Montego Blue..... **£11,795**



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2011(60), estate, multitronic, 73,000 miles, Condor Grey Metallic **£14,995**

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SLIDE RULES

WORDS & IMAGES
IAN KUAH

MERCEDES-BENZ INVITES US TO A SPECIAL TEST EVENT TO MARK 30 YEARS OF ITS 4MATIC FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE SYSTEM



“

Primarily a system designed to aid traction in winter, the original 4Matic system ran in permanent 4WD mode up to 7mph

”

W HILE 12-inch vinyl records and record players are making a big comeback worldwide, one old media format guaranteed to never experience a revival is videotape, in both its VHS and the technically superior but commercially less successful Betamax forms.

I still own the VHS format VCR I bought over a decade ago, and was pleased that I did when I came across a gem of a videotape given to me by Mercedes-Benz in early 1986. This tape contained footage of a 300TE 4Matic (S124) deftly extracting itself from a snow and mud covered verge on a country road, while the serious sounding commentary extolled the virtues of Mercedes-Benz's all-wheel drive technology for safe and secure driving in slippery conditions.

I remembered this tape during Mercedes' recent 4Matic Winter Workshop held in Hochgurgl, Austria. While the Winter Workshop is an annual event that rounds off the driving year, this edition was particularly significant as it also celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Mercedes-Benz 4Matic system, which debuted in 1985.

We were given the opportunity to look back across those three decades and compare the 4Matic mechanical and electronic technologies as they progressed from that first generation system to the third generation system we have today. It was also interesting to speak with the engineers about how the philosophy of all-wheel drive at Mercedes-Benz has changed over the years, as well as the differences between Mercedes and AMG vehicles that use the 4Matic system to aid traction and handling.

PEARL OF WISDOM

With the benefit of hindsight, the original 4Matic system of 1985 was rather primitive. For starters, it was a part time system, albeit much more sophisticated than the cheaper 'Syncro' equivalent used by Volkswagen on some of its front-wheel drive models during this era. All Mercedes-Benz cars were rear-wheel drive only at the time, and this early 4Matic system used a transfer case on a new gearbox housing to send drive to the front wheels when sensors detected the rear wheels slipping.

Primarily a system designed to aid traction in winter, the original 4Matic system ran in ▷



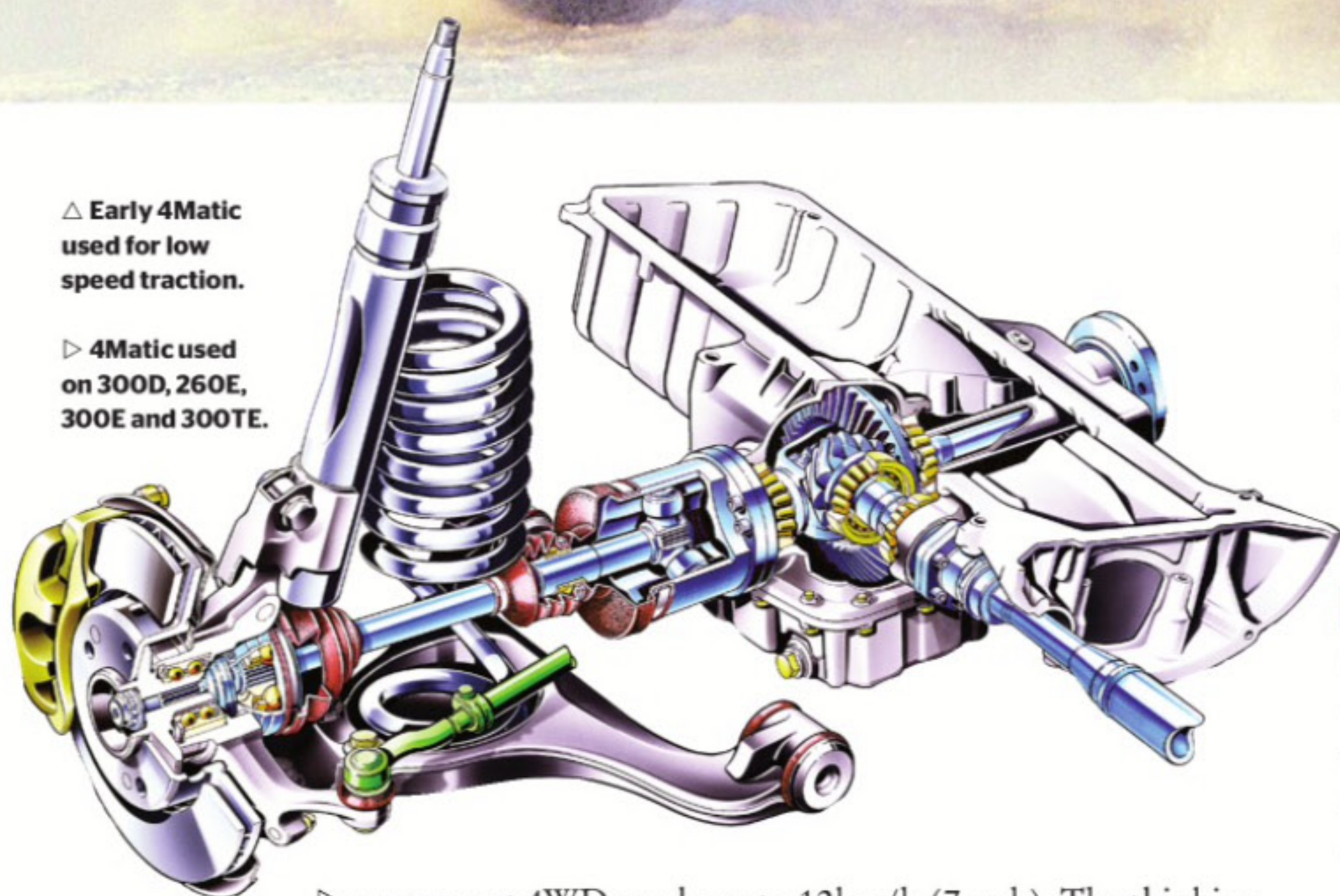
△ The evolution of 4Matic reveals much about Benz.





△ Early 4Matic used for low speed traction.

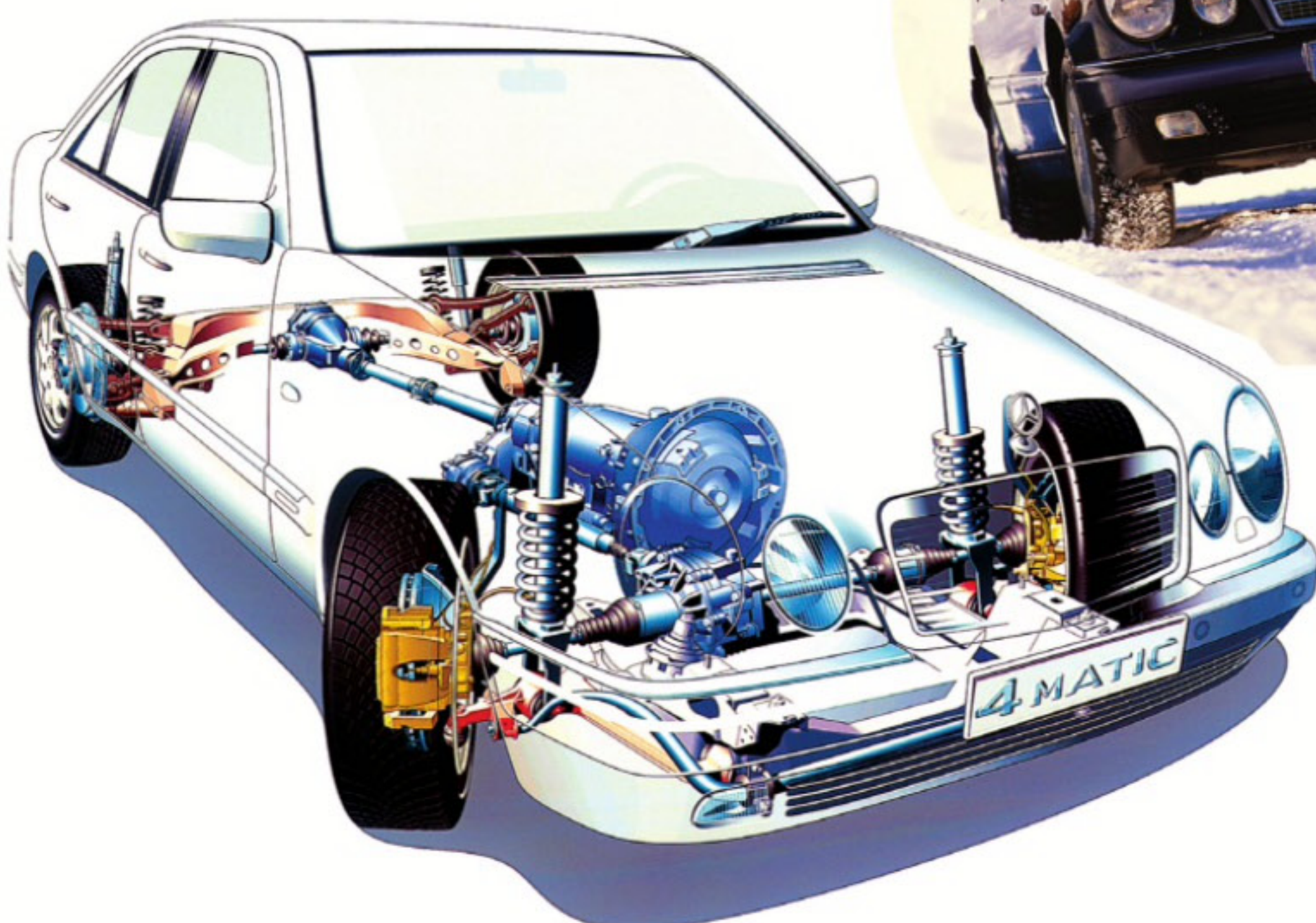
▷ 4Matic used on 300D, 260E, 300E and 300TE.



▷ permanent 4WD mode up to 12km/h (7mph). The thinking behind this was that all-wheel drive was required as a traction aid to move away on a slippery surface, or even for a full power start in the dry. Above that speed, if the sensors detected that the four-wheel drive system was no longer needed, it would simply disengage. With 4WD active, the front/rear power and torque split was 35/65 per cent, delivering quite sporty handling in the hands of a driver who knows how to balance power and steering.

▷ W210 E-Class offered with permanent 4WD.

▽ Second 4Matic used brakes to control power.



The centre differential contained two independently controlled hydraulically actuated clutches, allowing three distinct modes of operation: Rear-wheel drive only with the front axle disconnected, and two 4WD modes – one with a 35/65 front/rear torque split and the other with a 50/50 split. The rear differential lock, previously known as ASD, could also be locked if rear wheel slip was still detected when the system was running in 50/50 mode.

ELECTRONIC AGE

On board electronics were still in their infancy in 1985, with CAN-Bus high speed data transfer networks still six years away from production in a Mercedes-Benz. With drive-by-wire throttle control still a gleam in the engineers' eyes at the time, this early control system used inputs from the car's three-channel anti lock braking system (ABS), and a steering wheel angle sensor to govern its intervention, and disengaged the front axle drive immediately if the ABS was triggered.

This first generation 4Matic system came in two flavours, the first from 1985 to 1991, and its evolution from 1992 to 1993. Both used the inputs from electronic sensors to control the locking centre and rear differentials, but where the original system used a mechanical pressure test lever to disable the system hydraulically, the later version employed an electrical test switch to cut power.

While this first generation 4Matic system worked very well in providing the car with optimum traction, it also had well documented reliability issues relating to the multi plate clutch centre differential. This weak point was the reason the system was withdrawn in 1993, a good two years before the W124 E-Class ceased production.

The 4Matic badge was not seen on a Mercedes again until 1998, when it was reintroduced on the 210-series E-Class. A simple and more robust 4WD system, the second generation 4Matic took its engineering cues from the brand new ML SUV that had started to emerge from Mercedes' Tuscaloosa factory in Alabama at this time. And, as with the 124-series saloon and estate 4Matic models that went before it, the low volume, 210-series E-Class 4Matic was produced at the Magna



“

The 4Matic badge was not seen on a Mercedes again until 1998, when it was reintroduced on the 210-series E-Class

”

Steyr plant in Austria. The new system featured permanent 4WD with open front, centre and rear diffs, traction control achieved via the Electronic Traction System, which uses the ABS and additional valves to partially brake the one or more wheels that have lost traction.

The same basic tenets are used today with the third generation system. However, the advent of electronic throttle control, ESP, and high speed data transfer protocols that link up engine, gearbox, brakes and other dynamic systems in a closed loop, along with much faster sensors and predictive mapping have made the process of governing traction and stability that much more sophisticated and seamless in operation.

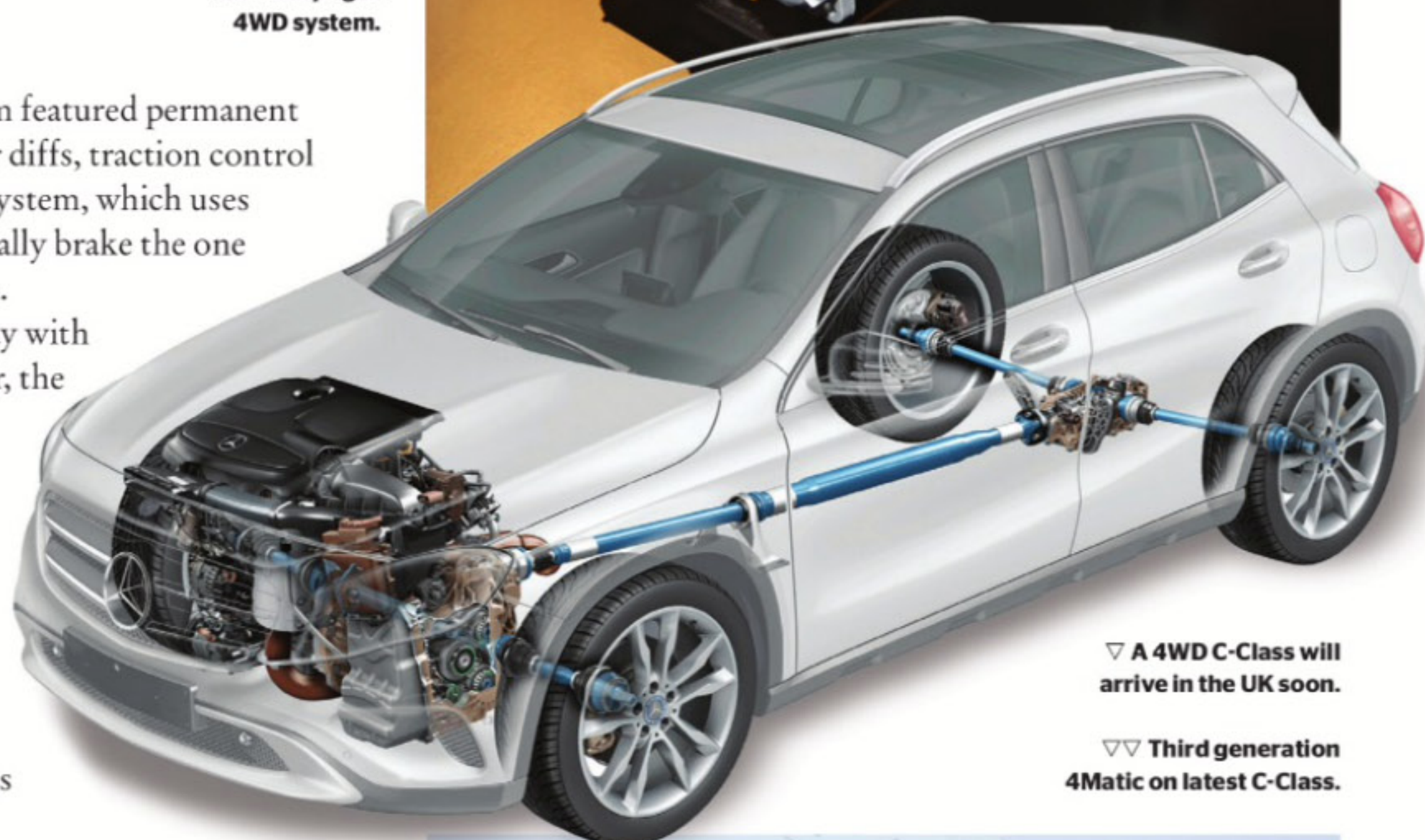
From a practical, as well as a marketing point of view, there is no question that offering 4Matic as an option across the board, from A-Class to S-Class, has been a boon to Mercedes-Benz sales in territories where winter conditions make four-wheel drive a basic necessity. High up in the mountains at Hochgurgl, I had the chance to drive the GLA250 4Matic, as well as the brand new C400 4Matic on the snow bound closed test course set up by Mercedes. Further snow began to fall during my drive, making this a real winter driving experience.

While the GLA performed as well as expected and could be coaxed into nice showboating drifts round slow bends, it was clear that the ESP intervention settings on the 328bhp, V6 engined C-Class had been set to err on the side of caution. The chief instructor of the event told me that the engineers assumed that, since this was a powerful car but not an AMG, it would be better to play safe and not ‘scare’ the normal driver. Thus, my attempts to provoke power oversteer with full throttle antics

▷

▷ Rear axle diff from A, B, CLA and GLA 4Matics.

▽ Compact cars use a very light 4WD system.



▽ A 4WD C-Class will arrive in the UK soon.

▽▽ Third generation 4Matic on latest C-Class.



▽ C400 refused to be provoked by harsh inputs.





△ Extra weight of 4Matic makes little difference.

◁ Preceding CL also came with four-wheel drive.

◁△ With 449bhp on tap, 4Matic is most useful!

▷ on slow bends, even with ESP off, came to nothing as the power was simply shut off. The only way to break this car loose was to find a wider curve, go in faster and let momentum take over.

On public roads, the worth of 4Matic was amply proven during my drive up the mountains from Innsbruck Airport to Hochgurgl in the supremely comfortable S500 4Matic Coupe, whose only downside is its girth on narrower roads. Aided by winter tyres, the big coupe's grip on the damp, cold road surface was never in doubt, and with the 4Matic system able to deploy all 449bhp and 516lb ft perfectly to enable swift and safe overtaking, my journey was rapid and stress free.

With a 4Matic system of any persuasion, accelerating briskly from rest in the dry, or joining a main road from a T-junction in the wet, is totally undramatic. The car just grips and goes, and you merely have to ensure you make allowance for the extended braking distances required on slippery surfaces. Even on a dry

road, the extra traction and balance afforded by 4Matic means that you can begin to accelerate sooner and with more throttle once past the apex of a given bend, particularly tighter ones on a hilly road. As this makes a car faster and more relaxed from point to point, it is frustrating that the most powerful models with the V8 biturbo motors are only available in LHD form.

AMG AND 4MATIC

It was no surprise that Ola Källenius, the past AMG boss and a native of Sweden, was responsible for introducing 4Matic to AMG cars. However, the way that the high performance division of Mercedes interprets 4Matic operation is somewhat different from its philosophy on mainstream models.

The first AMG models to adopt 4Matic from day one were the A45 and CLA45, although the E63 AMG 4Matic launched first. As the A45 and its CLA45 sister are based on a FWD design with a more nose heavy (60/40 per cent) weight distribution, their 4Matic system is set up for a 50/50 power split, but up to 100 per cent will go to the rear axle if necessary.

With RWD models like the E-Class and S-Class, AMG re-engineers the 4Matic hardware to deliver 33/67 per cent front/rear torque distribution compared to the 45/55 ratio used in mainstream 4Matic cars. Apart from unique control software, different rear driveshafts and some other hardware is involved.

AMG's engineers also recalibrated their three-stage ESP to support the characteristics of the 4Matic system. Thus, in 'Sport handling mode', the Dynamic Assist function performs selective braking intervention on individual wheels to significantly reduce understeer when turning into a bend, or mid bend to help cope with a tightening curve.

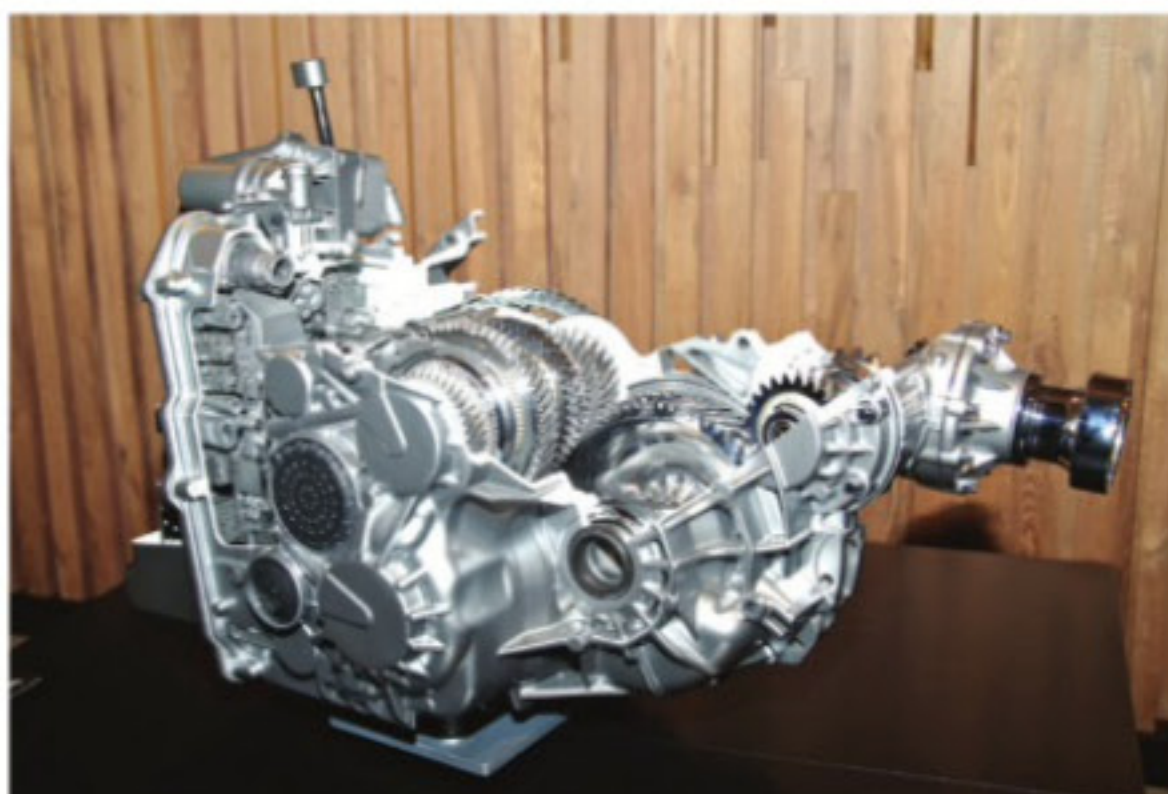
The good news, however, is that to answer the challenge from the Audi S and BMW M Performance models, Mercedes will soon launch a new line of 'AMG Sport' models to fill the breach between the mainstream and AMG cars. The first of these is the C450 AMG, which comes with 4Matic as standard and will be made in RHD. As the old saying goes, 'Good things come to those who wait'. 🏁

◁▽ 67 per cent of power sent to rear of new S63.

◁▽▽ 7G-DCT used in the latest 4Matic Mercs.



“
The first AMG models to adopt 4Matic from day one were the A45 and CLA45
”



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OWNERSHIP
230SL Pagoda

WORDS AND IMAGES ROBB PRITCHARD

Love *at first sight*

Following bad luck with a new car order, this 230SL Pagoda proved the perfect remedy, and its dotting owner has not looked back since





△ Jadran often loses himself in the experience.

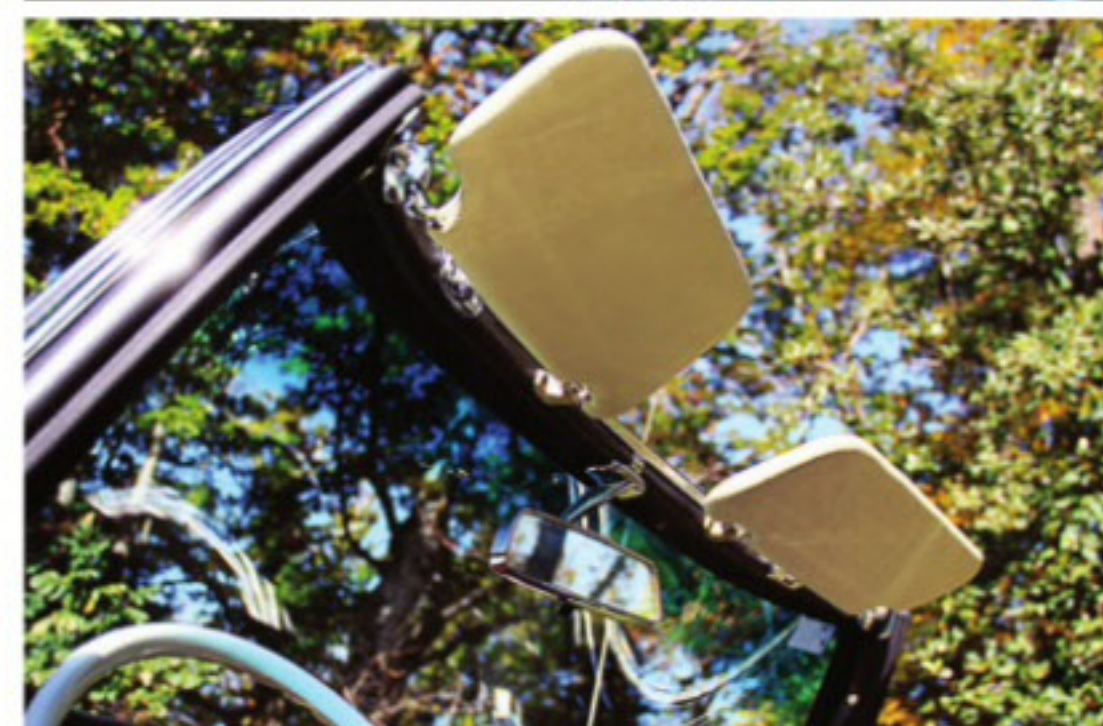
△◁ Oldtimer Klub Zagreb badge added.



△ A standard W113SL is just 4,285mm long.

▽ Becker radio sourced on the cheap, luckily.

▽▽ Each sun visor cost in excess of £250!



“Up until that moment, I'd never even thought about owning a classic Mercedes, but I knew this was the car for me”

“All the leather is intact, and the springs in the seats are the ones from 1965!”



THIS STORY DOESN'T START WITH A Mercedes-Benz enthusiast or even a classic car lover, simply a man walking down the street one day who fell in love with a stunning 1965 230SL Roadster.

A few years ago, Croatian construction company owner Jadran Matic decided it was the right time to purge his bank account and finally live his boyhood dream of owning an exclusive coupe sports car. That decision happened to coincide with the local launch of the new Maserati GT, and so a 40 per cent deposit was put down for the €190,000 car. The next step though, wasn't to pick it up and proudly drive it around his native Zagreb, but to wait... and wait... until the point that Jadran became so fed up he got his money back.

"I visited my brother in Australia a few years ago and he introduced me to a 500bhp Ford Falcon, so I know the thrill that comes with performance, and as the business was doing well, I thought 'why not?'. But when the Maserati deal fell through, I had no idea what the next plan would be.

"A couple of days later, however, I was out and saw my neighbour – who imports cars from America – drive by in an SL Pagoda and at that moment I knew I just had to have it. It was love at first sight – as easy as that," he says. "Up until that moment, I'd never even thought about owning a classic Mercedes-Benz, but I knew that was the car for me."

And the more Jadran found out about the car, the more there was to like. It had been owned and maintained regardless of cost for 44 years by Lotter Breman, a Californian Mercedes dealer. "In all his time running the dealership, it was Lotter's

favourite car, and he'd looked after it so well that everything was original," reveals Jadran. "There was only one problem with the sale though, and that was that Lotter's widow only wanted it sold to someone who was going to look after the Mercedes as well as her late husband.

The importer finally convinced her that Jadran would, and the perfectly reasonable sum of €36,000 was handed over which, thanks to Jadran cancelling his order for the Maserati, left him around €150,000 free for maintenance and restoration work – not that the 230SL needed it.

RECOGNITION

The paperwork process to get the Mercedes-Benz registered as a classic in Croatia was relatively painless, apart from the fact that it took two months to complete, in which time all Jadran could do was look at the Pagoda sitting patiently in the garage. "That was really hard, as just looking at the car makes you want to get in and go for a drive," he admits.

But early one winter morning in 2008, it was fully legal, comprehensively insured and fired up. "The first place we drove to was Samobar, a heritage town not far from Zagreb that is famous for its cakes. We parked the SL on the main square and I sat there thinking how I was suddenly a real classic car owner and enthusiast. Being behind the wheel was such an incredible feeling, just cruising along with the roof down and listening to the amazing, full sound of the straight-six through the twin exhaust pipes, and taking in the details like the huge steering wheel with the ivory inlays.

JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz 230SL (W113)

ENGINE
M127 2,306cc 6-cyl

POWER
148bhp@5,500rpm

TORQUE
145lb ft@4,200rpm

TRANSMISSION
4-speed auto, RWD

WEIGHT 1,295kg

0-62MPH 10.7sec

TOP SPEED 121mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION
27.7mpg

YEARS PRODUCED
1963-1967

Figures for a 1965 230SL Pagoda as pictured; fuel consumption determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 110km/h, 68mph) plus 10 per cent



◁ Lesser power of the 230 does not spoil cruising.

△ This 1960s SL has a timeless, natural beauty.

△△ Automatic gearbox suits urban driving.

"The Maserati was completely forgotten and I soon applied to join the Oldtimer Klub Zagreb. Once a member, I met many more people who loved old cars just like me, which was perfect. That was six years ago and I have only added 6,000 miles to the original 73,000 – I think that 1,000 miles per year is a good balance between preservation and enjoyment."

Fixing age related issues is all part and parcel of owning a classic car, but thanks to the affection and attention of its previous owner, this 230SL has been almost entirely free of issues. "There was a problem with the gearbox when the selector wouldn't come out of neutral one day, but we have a great classic car mechanic in Zagreb and he sorted it out with a few small new parts and everything was as good as new," Jadran explains.

"The same guy changed all the rubber seals and pipes for me, as some were showing their age. But when he stripped the wheels down to look at the hubs, he was amazed that no work needed to be done. In fact, the car was so clean underneath that he called the other mechanics to come over and have a look, and they all said that they had never seen such an old car look so good. It lived under the strong sun of California for most of its life, but even so all the leather is intact, and the springs in the seats are the ones from 1965!"

The only other 'faults', if you can call them that, were a few scratches which Jadran thinks occurred during shipping, so he decided to have the body repainted. "The shop used Glasurit 50 – the same stuff from the same company that supplied the Mercedes-Benz factory, and while the car was being reassembled new wheelarch protectors and a fire cover on the bulkhead were

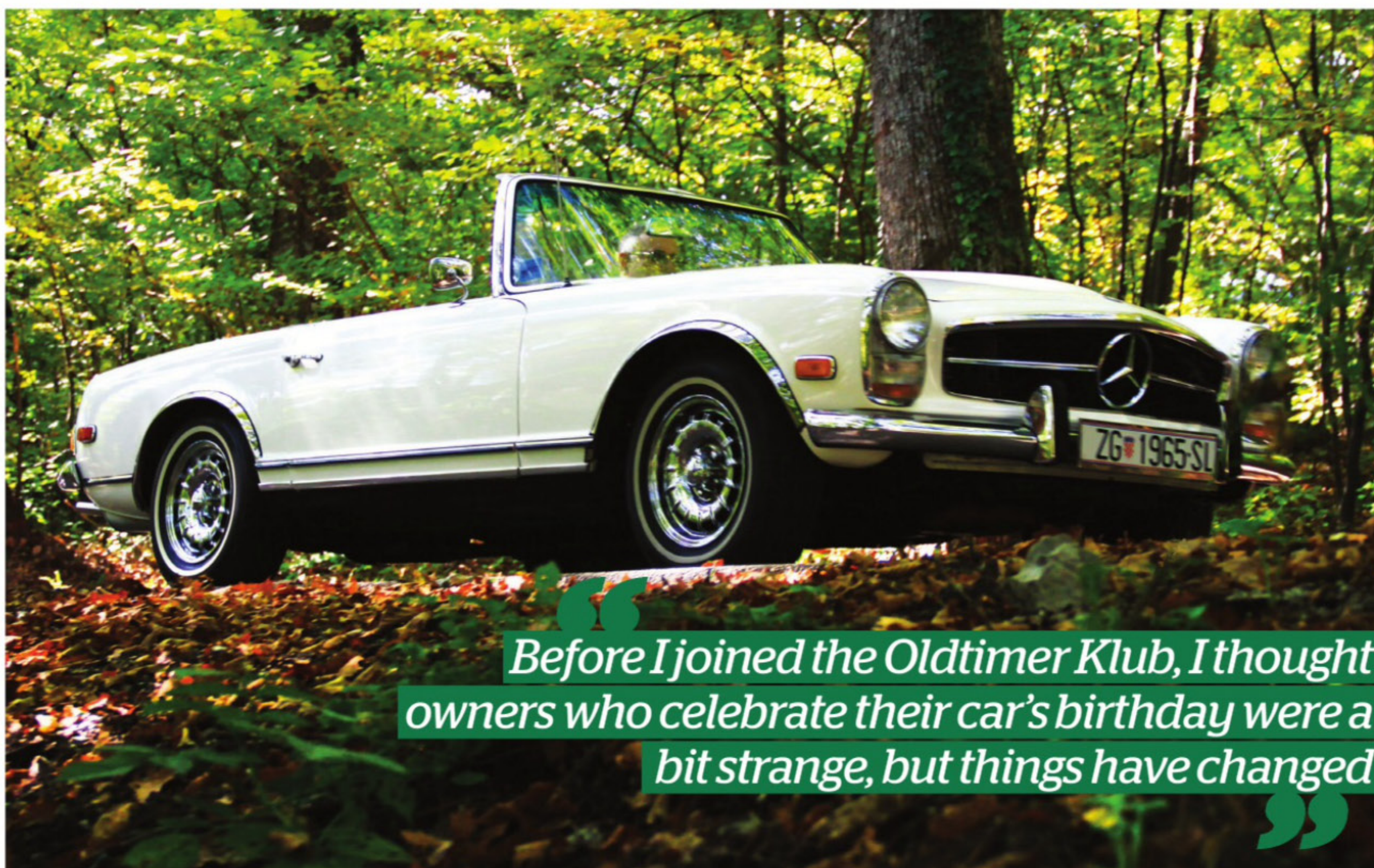
added, as the originals were a little worn. We sourced these from a Croatian company called Mercedes Euroline, which unfortunately didn't survive the financial crisis.

EVERY LITTLE HELPS

"Now I get everything I need from Mercedes-Benz Classic in Stuttgart, but not everything is so cheap," Jadran confirms. "For example, the two sun visors were €700! I got the whitewall tyres from America, and I found the period correct Becker Mexico radio in a classic car market in Samobor for the equivalent of €50. It is €400 from Germany, so I was quite happy with that!" Even with around €150,000 left to spend on the Pagoda, it's good to hear that Jadran still likes to find a bargain.

At *Mercedes Enthusiast*, we don't just muse over parked cars – the real experience is driving them. Just outside of Zagreb is the Mèdvednica mountain and its 1,035-metre Sljeme peak, which was actually a special stage on last year's Sydney-London Classic Marathon Rally, a perfect place for a photoshoot.

After a quick coffee (nothing is done in Croatia without coffee) we set off. The streets of Zagreb are not exactly classic car friendly – the tarmac is pockmarked with sunken drain covers and badly matched repaired sections. The 230SL's suspension is original – the springs, shocks, and the bushes are all 49 years old – so Jadran has to weave along. But he's more aggressive in traffic than I would have imagined. Pedestrians are given the pleasure of watching the car sail past at speed, and crawling traffic is tackled with aplomb. There is a lot of leeway given to a classic car though, so no one was upset. ▷



“Before I joined the Oldtimer Klub, I thought owners who celebrate their car’s birthday were a bit strange, but things have changed”


▷ “I look in my mirrors a lot more than when I’m driving my SUV,” Jadran says. “Any damage can be repaired, but that’s not the point – the body wouldn’t be original anymore and I don’t think I could bear that, so I am always nervous of bad drivers.”

THE BIG FIVE-O

Out into the leafy suburbs, we follow the trams and everyone looks out with wistful expressions on their faces. I have participated in the Gumball 3000 a couple of times and know the unbridled jealousy that supercars and their owners attract, but people look at the Pagoda with respect. “The girls are looking at the car, not me,” Jadran laughs. “But you can’t have everything!”

Out in the countryside, Jadran puts his foot down. “I didn’t tell you before, but when Lotter’s widow found out the car was being sold to someone who fell in love with it straight away, she cried tears of happiness,” he reveals as he adjusts a €350 sun visor. “So when this story is published, I will send her a copy of the magazine. Then she’ll know how much this car is loved.”

One thing the SL doesn’t like is going up steep hills slowly. Before we notice anything is wrong, the temperature gauge needle is in the red. After a quick call to a mechanic for advice, we stop and use the opportunity to take photographs in the grounds of the Medvedgrad Castle. “We should have brought a picnic,” I say to Jadran who is sitting patiently in the shade. “This is Croatia,” he smiles. “A basket of beer would be better!” The sauce will have to wait though, as after a few minutes rest the SL’s temperature gauge returns to its normal position.

So what plans does Jadran have for his classic Mercedes-Benz? “One thing crossed my mind recently, actually. Before I joined the Oldtimer Klub Zagreb, I thought owners who celebrate their car’s birthday were a bit strange, but things have changed and, as this Mercedes-Benz is 50 years old in 2015, I will spend about €2,500 [£1,900] on the car to bring it up to concours condition – just in time to win ‘Best in Show’ at the next classic rally!” Is Jadran the right owner for this car? We don’t doubt it... 



△ The Pagoda shames today’s dull car designs.

◁ Radial tyres for the 14-inch chromed rims.

▽ Jadran has big plans for his SL Pagoda.



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



560SL Sport, 1988, left hand drive, gleaming Signal Red with Tan hide interior, hard and Tan soft tops, over-mats, light up mirrors, power windows, tinted glass, power mirrors, central locking, air-con, cruise control, stereo system, ABS, alloys, SRS, air-bags, expensive MB car cover, auto, power steering, only 19,000 miles from new, FSH. £49,750



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

VIEWING BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

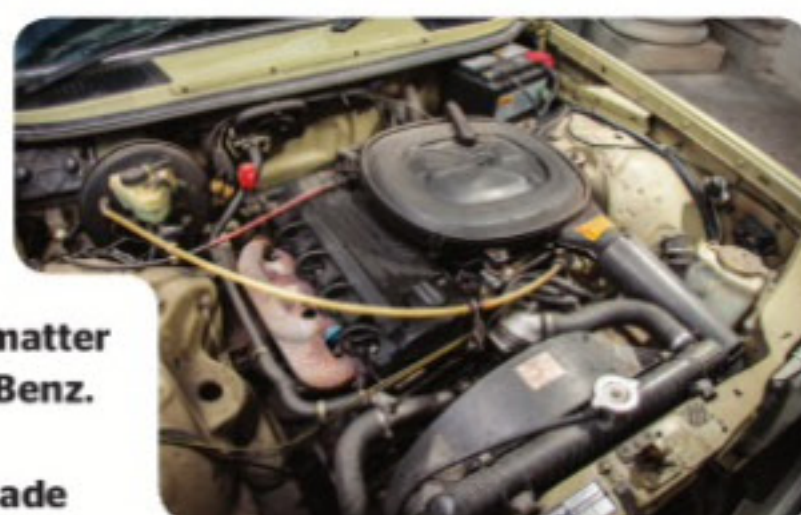
Gildenhill Place, Gildenhill Rd, Swanley, Kent BR8 7PD

Tel: 01322 669081 Fax: 01322 662400 Mobile: 07836 250222 www.peterjarvis.net



▷△ Big miles matter not to this old Benz.

▷ M102 was made for quite some time.



▷▷ Suitably green hue for cloth seats.

△ This W123 came with responsibilities.



◁ The body looks in very good shape.



△ Careful evolution of a Mercedes theme.

◁ This late W124 200 has a driver airbag.

◁◁ Complex M111 with four-valve tech.



WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Despite finding himself a reliable daily driver in the form of a W124 E-Class, this Mercedes-Benz fan couldn't resist adding its predecessor to his stable

WORDS AND IMAGES **ERIC RICHARDSON**

FOR THE YOUNG Udai Kandalama growing up in Sri Lanka, the sight of a Mercedes-Benz was something special. "They were cars that I really admired," he explains when we meet near his home in Cardiff. "In fact, my father still has one – a W126. So when I see something of that period, like the W123 and W124 E-Classes of the 1970s to 1990s, I really admire them."

With a seed planted in his mind, and no doubt memories of home playing a part, Udai ventured onto a well known auction site, in 2013, where he started to keep an eye on the various W124 Mercedes E-Classes that were being offered.

"It took a couple of months to find one that I thought looked good enough to buy, and then this particular car came up," he adds while tapping the wing of the blue E200 standing next to us. "After speaking to the owner about the car and feeling happy with what I was hearing, I decided to go and have a look at it in London."

"It turned out the car had been sitting in a barn for about a year, and the seller had bought it off the second owner and just parked it up and left it there. Thankfully, the car had a full Mercedes-Benz service history, and it looked really nice. I took it for a test drive and it drove very well, so I ended up buying it for £1,850."

So has the car provided trouble free motoring? "Almost," Udai replies. "I did have the water pump replaced, which was done by Mercedes-Benz. But beyond that the car hasn't needed anything else. I've covered about 8,000 miles in the last year and it's performed faultlessly."

REPUTATION INTACT

With a perfectly functioning W124 to hand, I'm keen to understand how Udai came to own the W123 230E that is sitting alongside the W124. "I was at a garage in Cardiff called Continental Cars, and got chatting to the owner about my W124. He asked me if I was interested in any other Mercedes, as he knew of a W123 that was for sale. It belonged to a regular customer of the company – a chap in his 90s, who would regularly bring it down for a service, but had sadly passed away in early 2014. This man's son had been in touch with Continental Cars to see if it knew of anyone who wanted the Mercedes, but it had to be someone who would look after it."

"I got in touch and found out the son who was selling the car was a retired doctor. Being in the same profession we soon discovered that we knew many of the same people. For the family, it was the care of the W123 that was of more importance to them than the money. So after a test drive, during which it drove beautifully given it had covered 139,000 miles, I just couldn't say no to it!"

While the 230E had been looked after mechanically, the body had succumbed – as is usually the case with W123s – to corrosion on the rear wheelarches. So shortly after purchasing the car, Udai handed it over to a local body shop to tend to the perforated metalwork around both rear arches, and it must be said the result is fantastic.

With a now very presentable W123 in the stable, Udai's next task was to demonstrate the

JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz 230E (W123)

ENGINE M102 2,299cc 4-cyl
POWER 134bhp@5,100rpm
TORQUE 127lb ft@3,500rpm
TRANSMISSION 4-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,360kg
0-62MPH 12.3sec
TOP SPEED 109mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 22.1mpg
YEARS PRODUCED 1980-1985

Mercedes-Benz E200 (W124)

ENGINE M111 1,998cc 4-cyl
POWER 134bhp@5,500rpm
TORQUE 140lb ft@4,000rpm
TRANSMISSION 4-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,360kg
0-62MPH 12.0sec
TOP SPEED 121mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 24.8mpg
YEARS PRODUCED 1992-1995

Figures for a 1985 230E and a 1994 E200 as pictured; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

pleasures of classic car driving to Mrs Kandalama. "She isn't a fan of old cars and was very sceptical when I bought the 123 instead of something newer," Udai explains. "But she wanted to go for a ride in it and soon began to notice how people would stare at the car as we drove by them. She was quite amazed at how much attention it was getting, and after that she started to appreciate the feeling you get of being inside an older car. I think it is safe to say she's transformed into a classic car fan."

TRUE TO HIS WORD

With approval from his wife so expertly secured, I ask Udai what his future plans are for the cars? "The W123 lives in the garage during the week, but comes out at weekends as a weekly treat to myself. I promised the son of the previous owner that I'd look after it, and so I will. I'll certainly be keeping it, as it is just too nice a car to let go." And what of the W124? "Again, I've got no plans to sell it. It's my daily car, and a reliable one at that. No, I'm happy with what I've got, thank you."



"The W124 had been sitting in a barn for a year, but it had a full Mercedes-Benz service history and looked really nice"

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Breaking new ground in the UK market, the next challenge for Mercedes-Benz is to maintain its momentum, and cars like the diesel powered SLK should help dealers blow away the winter blues

WORDS GUY BAKER IMAGES DAIMLER AG/CRAIG PUSEY

The SLK is a firm favourite, especially in diesel guise



THE YEAR 2014 will go down as a crucial one in Mercedes' drive to become a genuine UK rival to BMW and Audi in terms of sales volumes. There's never been any doubt that Stuttgart's cars possess greater kudos, but to maintain that premium allure whilst increasing sales to five per cent of the UK new car market has been a huge achievement. Increasing that share long term may prove far harder.

New model launches in the last 12 months have brought market leading technology, whilst edgy design has yielded a greater relevance to the brand as a whole, but it's how these newer models perform on the used market that

will further define Mercedes' status as a prestige UK brand.

The very early signs are good, as Rupert Pontin, Head of Valuations at Glass's, explains. "Buyers have fed on the Mercedes-Benz feel-good factor, and demand for some core models has improved. The SLK is a firm used favourite, especially in diesel guise, offering cracking value for money with sensible running costs."

Interestingly, the revised E-Class is also a popular seller, with diesel Sport estates particularly desirable and hard to find. And although used W176 A-Classes are holding their values well, there are still plenty of takers at current prices. According to Glass's, the fastest selling used

Mercedes are currently the M-Class and the SLK, whilst on average an R-Class SUV-estate takes the longest time to sell.

A HELPING HAND

At the time of writing, Mercedes-Benz dealerships were offering new E-Class estates from £359 a month, if you take out its personal finance with six per cent APR. And Mercedes-Benz salesmen are prepared to make a sizeable contribution to persuade you – on an E220 Bluetec SE automatic with metallic paint, for instance, this amount totals just under £4,100.

Franchised dealers were also offering zero per cent APR finance and a £500 deposit contribution on used SLKs over 90 days old, and

9.9 per cent APR finance and up to £750 deposit contributions on A-Classes, B-Classes, C-Classes and E-Classes over 90 days old. But do check the very latest offers with Mercedes-Benz dealers and online as they can change.

Elsewhere, online discounter www.buyacar.co.uk was offering £6,962 off the retail price of a new SLK250 CDI AMG Sport and a whopping £10,119 off a new SLK55 AMG, as well as a very reasonable £2,730 off the retail price of a CLA220 CDI AMG Sport. Fancy something a bit more traditional? Then check out supermarket www.cargiant.co.uk, which has plenty of good condition, ex fleet, 2009 to 2011 C220 CDIs from £8,799.

Our best used buy this month...

C180 K Estate (2009-2012)

Pre facelift, 204-series C-Classes offer great value for money right now, and if it's an estate you're after then take a look at the C180 Kompressor BlueEfficiency Estate Sport. Sleek, attractive and frugal, under the bonnet lies a 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine capable of 37.7mpg (NEDC combined) to go with perky supercharged performance. Almost all examples have an automatic, Artico upholstery, cruise control, 17-inch AMG alloys, adjustable front seats and heated/folding mirrors. Expect to pay between £8,999 and £12,999.

► Want an affordable Mercedes-Benz estate with a bit more poke? Then check out our top three £12,000 performance estates on page 84!



FORECOURT FIND

C209 CLK63
AMG Coupe

Stylish, reassuringly controlled and robustly built, the CLK63 AMG Coupe was always a rare beast. So we were excited to discover this 9,677-mile, designo Mauritius Blue example advertised for just £32,950 at B&M Sports & Prestige Cars, an independent dealer based in Warwickshire.

Built in 2009, the CLK63's guttural, normally aspirated V8 produces 474bhp and thrives on revs, delivering 4.6-second 0-62mph performance. As well as a full Mercedes-Benz service history, this CLK also boasts a long list of equipment that includes a seven-speed automatic transmission with paddleshifters, full AMG body styling, Basalt Grey nappa leather upholstery, Headlamp Assist, blue tinted glass, heated front seats with memory, and luxury climate control. Priced to reflect the car's low mileage and condition, you'd be hard pushed to find a finer example.

► Dealer info **B&M Sports & Prestige Cars**
Tel 0800 881 5527/01789 777171
Web www.bandmcars.co.uk



△ Gorgeous Mauritius Blue paint goes well with the AMG alloys.

▷ AMG's 6.2-litre M156 V8 makes 474bhp and a huge 465lb ft torque.

▽ Basalt Grey leather seats; paddles linked to seven-speed AMG 'box.



TOP TIPS

INSURANCE
DOS
AND
DON'TS

Discover our best ways to minimise your insurance premium whilst remaining properly covered

⌚ Always look to minimise your risk – the more sensibly you appear to drive the lower the risk. Avoiding or minimising points on your driving licence is essential, as is parking off-road, or in a garage – if at all possible.

⌚ Fitting a tracking device may help to reduce your premium, as does being married, living with a partner or having young children.

⌚ Passing the advanced driving test will also help. And don't assume third party only insurance will be cheaper than fully comprehensive cover – sometimes it isn't!

⌚ Always shop around for the best deals online – you don't have to wait for annual renewal time to do this. Using a specialist performance broker or belonging to an owners' club can reduce premiums, and restricting yourself to a limited mileage can also help.

⌚ Adding a second responsible driver to your policy (like a partner who is a professional) can sometimes cut your premium, as can using a multi car policy if you own more than one car.

⌚ Finally, always remember to tell your insurer about every modification made to your car. Miss one out and you give the insurance provider a very good reason to not pay out in the event of a claim.



AUCTION SPOTLIGHT

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

● SLK230 Kompressor

2.3L, petrol, auto, 1998/S plate, 142,000 miles, **£500**

● SLK320

3.2L, petrol, auto, 2001/Y plate, 122,000 miles, **£950**

● C200 CDI Avantgarde SE

2.1L, diesel, auto, 2005/05 plate, 164,000 miles, **£1,400**

● A160 CDI Classic SE

2.0L, diesel, manual, 2005/55 plate, 75,000 miles, **£1,800**

● ML270 CDI

2.7L, diesel, auto, 2002/52 plate, 93,000 miles, **£2,800**

● E220 CDI Estate Elegance

2.2L, diesel, auto, 2005/05 plate, 107,000 miles, **£3,900**

● CL500

5.0L, petrol, auto, 2004/04 plate, 71,000 miles, **£4,200**

● SL500

5.0L, petrol, auto, 2002/52 plate, 77,000 miles, **£5,800**

● CLK200 K Coupe Avantgarde

1.8L, petrol, auto, 2002/06 plate, 32,000 miles, **£7,800**

● C55 AMG

5.4L, petrol, auto, 2004/04 plate, 60,000 miles, **£9,700**

● ML320 CDI Sport

3.0L, diesel, auto, 2006/56 plate, 66,000 miles, **£10,200**

● SL350

3.7L, petrol, auto, 2005/05 plate, 41,000 miles, **£10,300**

● SL55 AMG

5.4L, petrol, auto, 2003/03 plate, 93,000 miles, **£11,100**

● S500 L

5.5L, petrol, auto, 2006/06 plate, 51,000 miles, **£11,400**

● ML320 CDI SE

3.0L, diesel, auto, 2006/06 plate, 31,000 miles, **£12,200**

AND REMEMBER...

Always arrive early at car auctions, pick up the sales catalogue and examine the vehicles in the line up before the 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) immediately – 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 house at www.british-car-auctions.co.uk



TOP 3 £12,000 HOT ESTATES

Just because you demand the luggage capacity of an estate car, it doesn't mean you have to forgo performance. Far from it, in fact. There are plenty of fast, fashionable Mercedes-Benz estates on the market, with some of the best within reach of a relatively modest

£12,000 budget. You will of course need to make some compromises in terms of running costs, but when the mood takes you, you can savour the kind of performance normally reserved for sports cars. And don't rule out turbodiesel power – Mercedes' V6 is a stonking motor!



**C55 AMG
(2004-2007)**

Surely the daddy of affordable Mercedes performance estates, we put our money where our mouth is and bought a 2004 example. You too can enjoy the full AMG experience with 362bhp on tap and 62mph achieved in just 5.4 seconds – all in luxurious comfort. Enjoy leather upholstery, Comand with satellite navigation, cruise control, heated front seats, climate control, xenon headlights and front seats with memory.



**E350 CDI SPORT
(2010-2013)**

The newest of our three contenders and the only diesel, the E350 CDI's most recent V6 offers 261bhp/457lb ft torque, and 50mpg on long journeys, plus a seriously feisty 6.7-second 0-62mph time. Splash out £600 on an aftermarket remap at a specialist and you could see this benchmark time drop to just over six seconds, while improving in-gear acceleration. At this price though, you are looking at rare 100,000 milers.



**ML500
(2006-2007)**

Effectively an estate car on stilts, the early, W164 ML500 comes with 302bhp/339lb ft torque and the distinct advantage of four-wheel drive and a seven-speed automatic as standard. Its woofling 4,966cc M113 V8 catapults the SUV from 0-62mph in just 6.9 seconds, on the way to a top speed of 149mph – should you dare. Downsides? Get used to fuel economy that struggles to better 20mpg, and road tax is on the high side.

PRODUCTS REVIVE & ENJOY

MEGUIAR'S QUIK INTERIOR DETAILER

A quick wipe with Meguiar's Quik Interior Detailer maintains the look and feel of your Mercedes' interior plastic, vinyl, leather, rubber and metal surfaces, including its audio/visual equipment. The special, non smearing formula is suitable for all surfaces and cleans easily, whilst leaving a fresh fragrance. Priced at £9.99 for a 473ml spray bottle, you can purchase Meguiar's Quik Interior Detailer from most Halfords stores – find your nearest retailer by visiting www.halfords.com.



VALETPRO BLACK TO THE FUTURE

No need to hit 88mph, ValetPro's brand new restorer and protector turns the clock back on old or faded plastic trim, vinyl hoods and tyres, offering a deep, lustrous and natural dark finish that lasts for three months per application. Simply spread a small amount evenly, then allow five to 10 minutes for curing and then buff. Available in 250ml pots priced at £9.99, it's guaranteed not to damage painted or chromed surfaces. For a full list of stockists visit www.valetpro.co.uk.



CKS PERFORMANCE '45 AMG' DOWNPIPE

CKS Performance has produced a new Sport downpipe, which replaces the catalyst section for the A45, CLA45 and GLA45 AMG. Adding power and torque, it also enhances the exhaust note – especially on downshifts. Priced at £859.95 (including VAT), the package includes two O2 sensors and mounting brackets. A plug and play system, it requires no other modifications, and comes with a three-year unlimited mileage warranty and a lambda probe spacer to eliminate any check engine error messages. See www.ckspowerformance.com.



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Quentin Willson
Designed by **Quentin Willson**



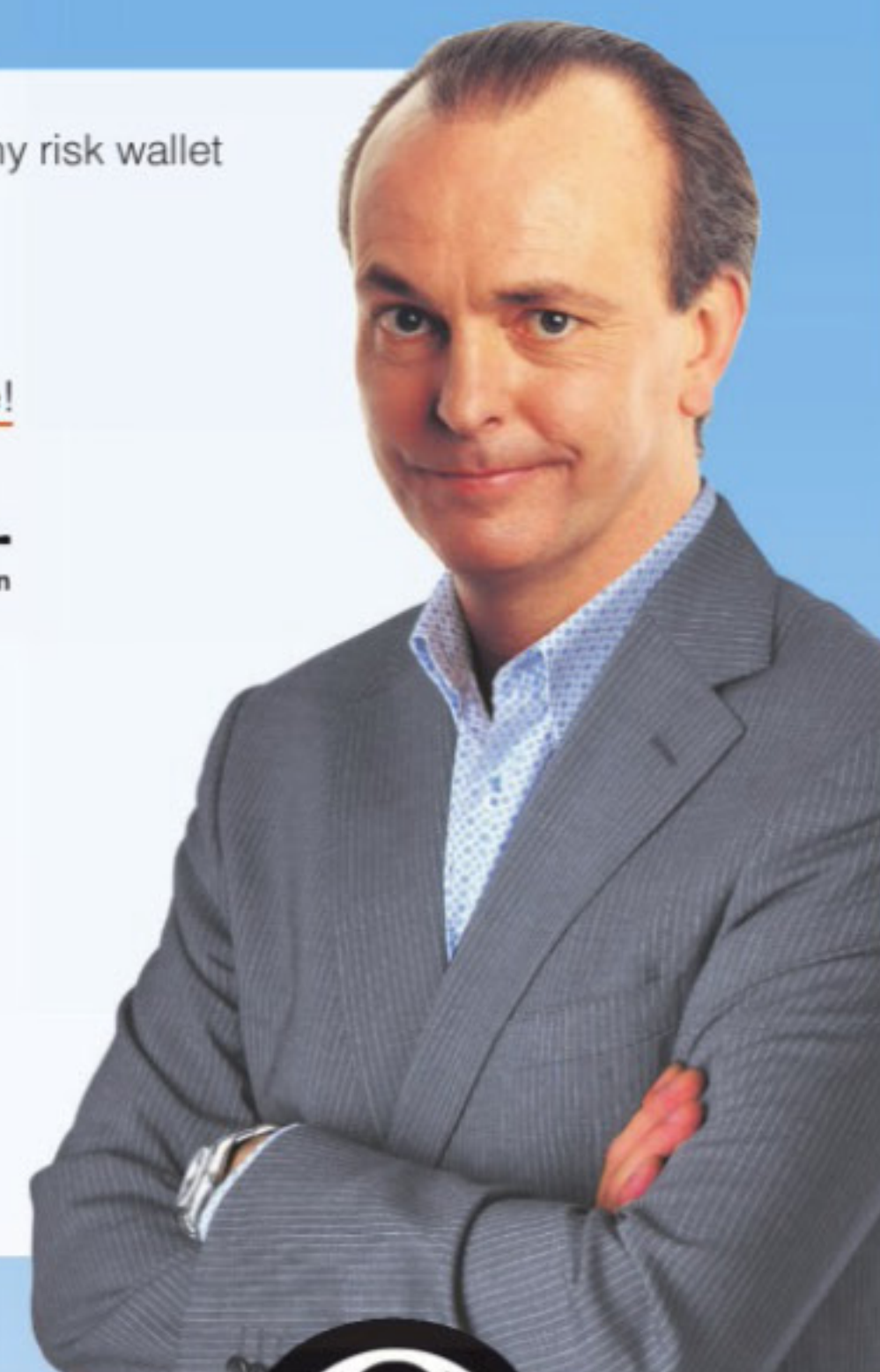
QUENTIN WILLSON'S GUIDE TO BEING WARRANTY WISE

Watch as motoring expert and consumer champion, Quentin Willson, explains the benefits of a used car warranty from Warrantywise.

Watch Quentin's Guide
warrantywise.co.uk/guide



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▽ Larger petrol units offer great value for money.

“It has joined the star cars that are still young enough to feel modern, but old enough to be affordable.”

FLASH FOR LITTLE CASH

With handsome looks, good practicality and plenty of engines to choose from, the 209-series CLK coupe is an appealing used buy, particularly in 2005-on facelifted form

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

FOR THOSE seeking a high quality, four-door saloon of a manageable size that is enjoyable to drive, comfortable and with a prestige image, the C-Class saloon takes some beating. But what if you want to retain these qualities but fancy driving something slightly more adventurous, to stand out from the crowd a little?

In that case, the 209-series CLK coupe was made for you. Built from 2002 to 2009, this two-door coupe boasts sharp and pretty styling, aided by a pillarless construction, and comes with an engine for everyone, from a 1.8-litre supercharged petrol unit to a 6.2-litre V8, and a four-cylinder or V6 diesel too. It was an expensive Mercedes in its day, with even the most basic model well

over £30,000 as it bowed out of production, but over five years on it has now joined the blessed ranks of star cars that are still young enough to feel perfectly modern, but old enough to be affordable.

Early cars sell for as little as £2,500 in the general used car market, and Mercedes-Benz Retailers are still selling them for as little as £7,000, with the usual comprehensive preparation and

warranty. Indeed there are so many for sale and so many versions, the choice can be confusing, so let us unravel the mysteries of the range.

DESIGN, EVOLUTION

The CLK, with more than a hint of the big CL coupe's lines, arrived in the UK in the spring of 2002, based on the W203 C-Class saloon that had been launched the previous year. The range started at the CLK200 Kompressor using the then new M271, 1.8-litre 'Twinpulse' engine, which replaced the previous 2.0- and 2.3-litre units. There were 2.6- and 3.2-litre V6s for the CLK240 and CLK320, and a V8 in the CLK500, but 13 years ago the inclusion of a diesel in a coupe range – the 2.7-litre CLK270 CDI – caused a few raised eyebrows.

A six-speed manual gearbox was nominally standard on everything up to the CLK240 and CLK270 CDI, but most cars were delivered with the optional, electronically regulated five-speed automatic,

**SPOTTED
FOR SALE**
PRIVATE SELLER
CLK200 Kompressor
Avantgarde
2006/06, black, black
leather, 50,000 miles,
£5,700, London



JUST THE FACTS

Mercedes-Benz CLK200 Kompressor Coupe (C209)

ENGINE M271 1,796cc 4-cyl supercharged
POWER 181bhp@5,500rpm
TORQUE 184lb ft@2,800-5,000rpm
TRANSMISSION 5-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,550kg
0-62MPH 9.1sec
TOP SPEED 140mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 32.5-33.6mpg
CO2 EMISSIONS 200-207g/km
YEARS PRODUCED 2002-2009

Mercedes-Benz CLK350 Coupe (C209)

ENGINE M272 3,498cc V6
POWER 268bhp@6,000rpm
TORQUE 258lb ft@2,400-5,000rpm
TRANSMISSION 7-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,615kg
0-62MPH 6.4sec
TOP SPEED 155mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 28.3-28.5mpg
CO2 EMISSIONS 237-239g/km
YEARS PRODUCED 2005-2009

Mercedes-Benz CLK220 CDI Coupe (C209)

ENGINE OM646 2,148cc 4-cyl turbocharged
POWER 148bhp@4,200rpm
TORQUE 251lb ft@2,000rpm
TRANSMISSION 5-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,590kg
0-62MPH 10.4sec
TOP SPEED 135mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 40.9-41.5mpg
CO2 EMISSIONS 178-181g/km
YEARS PRODUCED 2005-2009

Mercedes-Benz CLK320 CDI Coupe (C209)

ENGINE OM642 2,987cc V6 turbocharged
POWER 221bhp@3,800rpm
TORQUE 376lb ft@1,600-2,800rpm
TRANSMISSION 7-speed auto, RWD
WEIGHT 1,660kg
0-62MPH 6.9sec
TOP SPEED 155mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION 36.7-38.2mpg
CO2 EMISSIONS 197-205g/km
YEARS PRODUCED 2005-2009

Figures for a August 2006-on CLK200 Kompressor (cars built prior had 161bhp/177lb ft torque), a 2005 CLK350 as pictured, a 2007 CLK220 CDI as pictured, and a 2007 CLK320 CDI; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined; top speeds of the V6 petrol and turbodiesel engines are electronically limited

this being the only transmission for the 320, 500 and AMG models. As with the W203 C-Class saloon, the C209 CLK coupe adopted the more precise rack and pinion steering that replaced the previous recirculating ball system.

As in the previous C208 range, there was a muscle version, the 362bhp/376lb ft CLK55 AMG, which was added in September 2002. Three years after that the CLK received its mid term facelift, which saw some small exterior and interior trim changes, and new wheel designs added to the line up, but the main emphasis was on engines and equipment.

The CLK270 CDI with its five-cylinder engine was replaced by the CLK320 CDI using Mercedes' all new, OM642 three-litre V6 producing 221bhp and 376lb ft (or 306lb ft in the manual version the UK didn't get), and to reflect the growing popularity of diesels in the UK, a second oil burner was offered, the CLK220 CDI using the 2.1-litre,

OM646 four-cylinder and making 148bhp/251lb ft torque.

It was end of the road for the CLK240, which wasn't sufficiently quick or economical, replaced by the three-litre CLK280 with over a third more power and a quarter extra torque (228bhp/221lb ft). The CLK320 in turn became the 350, receiving the M272 3.5-litre V6, producing 268bhp/258lb ft.

In August 2006 there were more engine upgrades. The CLK500 gained the new M273 5.5-litre engine with 383bhp/391lb ft, while the CLK55 AMG gave way to the CLK63 AMG, adopting the M156 6.2-litre V8, rated at 474bhp/465lb ft. The base model, the CLK200 K received a boost too, now with 181bhp/184lb ft.

Hitherto, trim had been either Elegance or the more sporty Avantgarde, but a Sport model was available which for the first time gave the elegant CLK coupe an aggressive look. It brought 18- instead of 17-inch diameter wheels, of an AMG design, plus

15mm lowered suspension, AMG body styling and interior upgrades including sports seats and gearshift buttons on the steering wheel.

WHAT TO PAY

We mentioned a base price of around £2,500, but as ever it's better to pay more and get more for your money. We'd say £5,000 to £6,000 is a good price range for a C209 CLK, as it'll comfortably get you a 2005 facelift car. But as the well preserved, 2005/55 plate CLK320 Avantgarde pictured here shows, it's worth paying more for a car in better than average condition.

In terms of the best value for money, look no further than the bigger petrol models. For example, a CLK350 Elegance from 2009 is advertised for around £11,000 at an independent used car dealer, which is about £2,000 less than a CLK320 CDI that was slightly cheaper when it was brand new. The most sought after trim is, unsurprisingly, Sport – these

models selling for £1,000 more than Elegance or Avantgarde. Bear in mind there was also a 'Sports Package' factory option for Avantgarde cars, making them quite similar to those cars graced with the Sport trim line.

Setting aside the CLK63 AMG Coupe, the cheapest of which will be close to £20,000 (and the exotic Black Series a multiple of that), you should not expect to pay more than £14,000 on the general used market. Mercedes-Benz Retailers still sell C209s, their maximum price around £15,000. ▶

CLKs INSIDE AND OUT

POWERTRAIN

The 1.8-litre Kompressor engine was praised for its efficiency, but it is afflicted by one particular problem, reports Phil Jones of Pontypridd based Mercedes specialist Stuttgart Garage. "The timing chain stretches, and then the camshaft gears wear, and then you get the engine 'hunting' for a short period when it's first started. The engine light might come on, too." Replacing the timing chain alone is about £500 at Stuttgart Garage, but if the two cam adjusters need changing the job is pricier.

Another trouble spot is the wiring loom, which can become contaminated with oil leaking from the cam magnets for the variable valve timing system. "This creates problems with the ECU and affects the engine," Phil warns. A lesser problem, and one that only a knowledgeable Mercedes specialist will know about, is the likelihood of a breather pipe (underneath the inlet manifold) splitting and causing the engine light to glow.

The diesel V6 also has a weakness: an oil pipe at the top of the engine leaking and permeating, and ruining the turbo inlet shut off motor, after which the engine will not run properly. As with other models using the OM642, this is inexpensive if the seals for the pipe are replaced, the best time for this being during a service, when the labour time is next to zero.

The petrol V6s are pretty good, but the 3.5-litre M272 does have one issue, Phil reckons. "The front timing chain intermediate gear teeth wear, with the usual result of an engine light coming on, and a lack of power. "The front of the engine needs to be stripped, and it's very expensive - it doesn't happen with the old M112 engine."

The rare, six-speed manual gearbox is usually trouble free, but the five- and seven-speed autos can suffer a faulty electro-hydraulic plate and send the car into limp home mode, this issue not exclusive to CLKs.

From far left: CLK320 petrol uses the M112 V6, which doesn't suffer timing chain gear teeth wear like the succeeding M272 V6 in the CLK350; five- and seven-speed autos were available; the four-pot diesel is a little rugged but sips fuel at a reasonable rate.



SUSPENSION, STEERING AND BRAKES

It's a Mercedes, so it wears out its front ball joints. "It's the camber arm ball joints that go," says Phil, "so listen for knocking over speed bumps, and also a judder under braking." Mercedes recommends replacing both sides at once, but Phil reckons it's fine to do just the worn out side. Road springs break too, but are not pricey to replace, Stuttgart Garage charging £150 per spring.

Check that the power steering fluid reservoir is full, this being on the right-hand side of the engine bay (as you face the car from the front) on petrol models, and on the left on diesels. "It's meant to be sealed for life, but sometimes the fluid disappears!" Phil says. "If it's low, you'll hear a growling noise from the power steering pump." The brakes feel quite sharp and a vibration when braking could mean badly worn discs.



From left: Replacement front brake discs and pads will cost around £250; the 209-series CLK employs rack and pinion steering, unlike the 208-series.

"The CLK is still so fresh looking that we can easily forget the early cars are approaching 13 years old"

**SPOTTED
FOR SALE
MERCEDES
RETAILER
CLK220 CDI Sport**
2009/09, blue, black leather,
41,600 miles, £12,999,
Mercedes-Benz
of Taunton



Clockwise from top left: Lots of curving details in the cabin, here dressed in black Artico leather; Comand with sat nav a useful extra; the two rear seats are just about spacious enough for adults; a useful 435-litre boot; clear dials with a central computer screen.

INTERIOR AND ELECTRICS

The advice here is, to some extent, very obvious. "Make sure that everything is in full working order, that every button works," Phil advises. However, a less conspicuous but well known problem is the heating system, which can give out a clicking sound. What is happening is that the six 'stopper' motors, which electronically regulate the blending and defrosting functions, are not working correctly.

"Some of them are easy to fix, such as those in the footwell flaps, but with others it's a dashboard out job, which can take six hours," Phil warns. "We have some customers who have this done, and others who choose to leave it."



Clockwise from right: Optional wheels for this CLK220 CDI Avantgarde – the CLK200 K, CLK280 and CLK220 CDI had 16-inch wheels as standard; this CLK320 boasts xenon lights and 17-inch wheels; parking sensors all round, but look out for rust developing around the rear wheelarches of early examples.



BODYWORK AND WHEELS

The 209-series CLK coupe is still so fresh looking that we can easily forget the early cars are approaching 13 years old – and some of these are now starting experience bodywork corrosion. "On 2002 cars, look at the back wheelarches, as that's where corrosion tends to appear," Phil explains.

Mercedes-Benz fitted alloys as standard on all its 209-series CLKs, so check for wheels kerbed beyond refurbishment. The bigger the wheel diameter, the more likely this is to be the case, due to the decreasing side wall size – the 18-inch Sport wheels have 225/40 front and 255/35 rear tyres, leaving the AMG rims vulnerable. ➤



CLKs INSIDE AND OUT

VERDICT

You could criticise the 209-series CLK coupe for having a lesser ride quality than might be expected from a Mercedes-Benz, and the four-cylinder turbodiesel is neither particularly refined, nor quite as economical as Mercedes' latest oil burner, but does pack decent punch. These observations apart, this is a lovely car, a coupe with a proper back seat and plenty of boot space with 435 litres on offer.

So, which model should you choose? Most buyers want a diesel, and the three-litre V6 offers a brilliant combination of torque, economy and refinement – but the real bargains are the petrol V6s. Yes, they are thirsty and road tax is higher, but with their silky smoothness these – and the V8s for that matter – are a delight.



Pillarless poise

Mercedes-Benz is famous for its pillarless coupes, which make summer motoring a joy when all four windows are dropped. The C209's predecessor, the C208, did not have this style of body, but nonetheless the C209 would appear to be the last of Stuttgart's compact pillarless models, because the C-Class coupe which indirectly succeeded it in 2009 lacks this feature. An alternative is the 207-series E-Class coupe, but these are more expensive to buy and run. A further attraction of the C209 is that many have clearly been a second car in an affluent household, so finding the classic, low mileage, one-lady owner car in excellent condition is not so difficult.



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FOR SALE**
USED CAR DEALER
CLK350 Elegance
2008/08, black, black
leather, 59,000
miles, £8,990,
Basingstoke

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

MODEL	OIL SERVICE	MAJOR SERVICE*
CLK200/220 CDI	£180	£240
CLK320/350/320 CDI	£200	£260

* Includes fuel filter, brake fluid

Quotes from Stuttgart Garage

Recalls and non routine servicing costs

There have been two recalls, covering the emergency engine shut off software, and an electrical connection in the engine crankshaft sensor's chip housing (numbers R/2008/147 and R/2008/149)

- ★ Replace a stretched camshaft chain on a CLK200 Kompressor £500
- ★ Replace the electro-hydraulic plate on a seven-speed automatic gearbox £720
- ★ Fit new front lower ball joints (both sides) £300
- ★ Front brake discs and brake pads £250
- ★ Four premium brand tyres (225/40R18, 255/35R18) £800

Buyer's checks

- ✓ Listen for surging engine revs on start up, a sign of a stretched timing chain on the CLK200 Kompressor
- ✓ An engine wiring loom contaminated by oil will cause poor running and illuminate the engine warning light on the CLK200 Kompressor
- ✓ A rubber pipe on the V6 diesel leaks oil into the turbo inlet shut off motor, reducing engine performance, but a preventative fix is inexpensive
- ✓ Noisy power steering when turning the wheel could mean a low fluid level in the pump reservoir
- ✓ If front suspension ball joints are worn, creaking and knocking sounds, and juddering may occur over bumps
- ✓ On early, 209-series CLK coupes, check the rear wheelarches for corrosion
- ✓ A clicking noise from the heater can be expensive to rectify, as the dashboard may need removing

What you'll pay

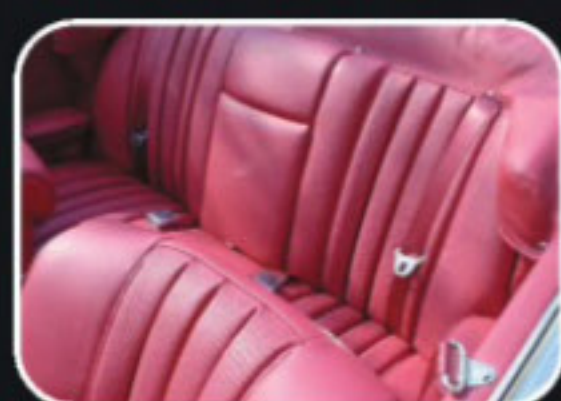
£2,500-£5,000 Early, 2002/2003 CLK200 K, CLK240 and CLK320, with high mileage and patchy history
£5,000-£7,500 Starting price for 2005 facelifted petrol models, CLK200 K, CLK350 and CLK500 – high mileage but should have service history
£7,500-£10,000 2006/2007 diesels, CLK220 CDI, CLK320 CDI, 2008/2009 CLK350 and CLK500 in private sale, starting price at Mercedes-Benz Retailers – CLK55 AMG, too
£10,000-£15,000 Low mileage, high spec CLK220 CDI and CLK320 CDI in desirable Sport trim; CLK63 AMG sell for £17,000-£20,000 from independent dealers

► Thank you to **McCarthy Cars** in Croydon for the loan of the CLKs Tel 020 8688 8086 Web www.mccarthycars.co.uk
 and to **Stuttgart Garage** in Pontypridd for technical advice and servicing costs Tel 01443 401838 Web www.stuttgartgarage.co.uk



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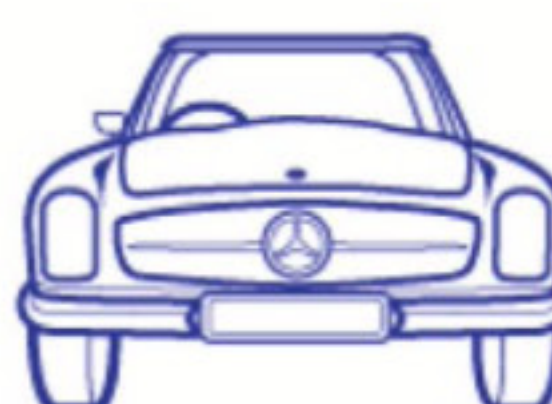
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“Connection to a diagnostic machine revealed nothing bar an old camshaft sensor issue”

JUDGEMENT DAY

An independent Mercedes specialist gives its verdict on our AMG C-Class, before getting stuck into various jobs on our 'to do' list

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

FACTSHEET

CAR 2004 S203 C55 AMG Estate

OWNER Mercedes Enthusiast

LOCATION London, UK

PURCHASED July 2014

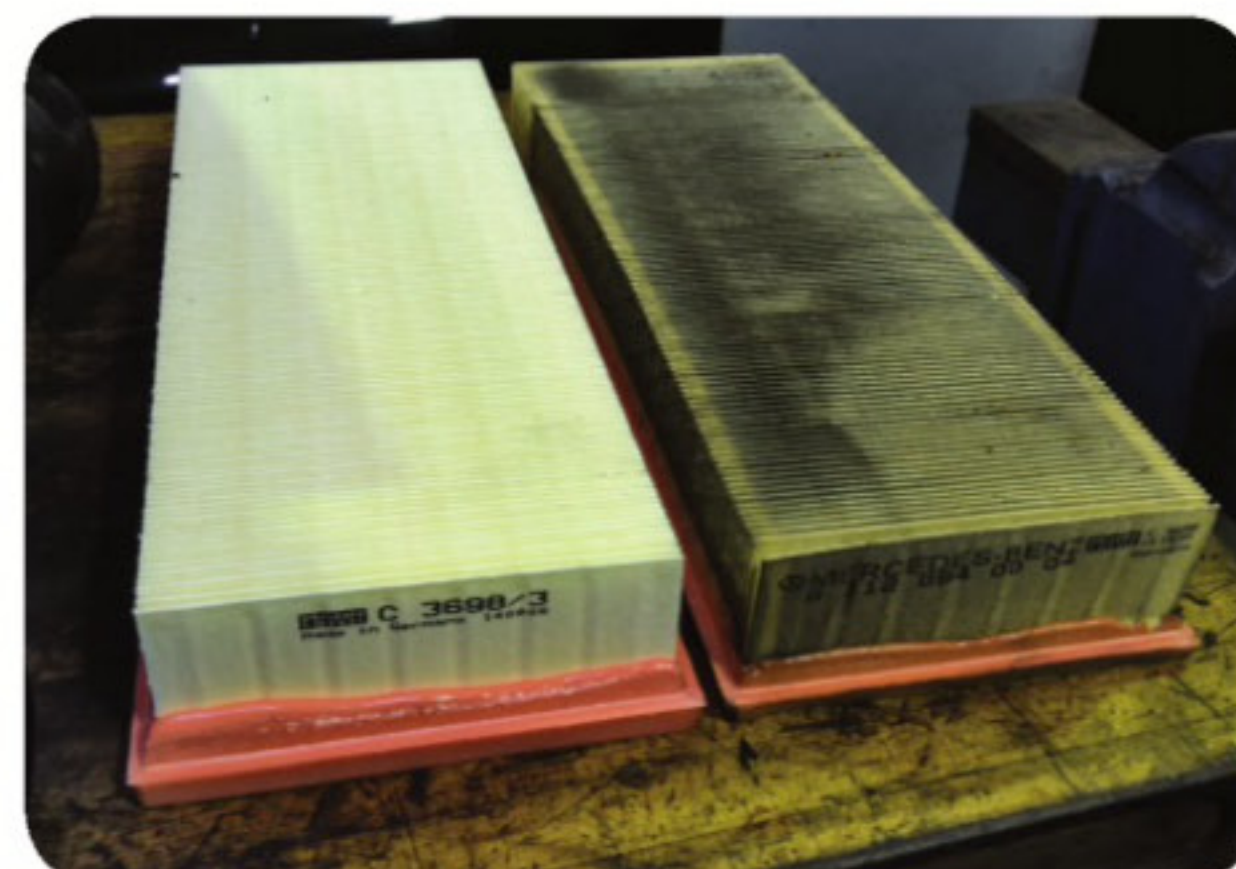
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Extensive B service carried out including changing all 16 spark plugs; discovered poor filler job on front bumper

YOU CAN BRAVE stones digging into your hands and kneecaps as you inspect a brake disc close up. You can take an extended test drive and listen extra hard with eyes suitably narrowed for anything untoward. You can pore over a history file and contemplate its every word. And you can carry out the kind of background checks saved only for the world's most wanted men.

But the first time you take your new car purchase to your favoured garage for a general inspection and service, there is always the nagging doubt that something terrible will be found, to the cost of your wallet and your pride.

The night before our journey to Prestige Car Service in Hampshire, I was confident our Brilliant Silver C55 AMG Estate would not let us down during its first intimate encounter with

our friendly Mercedes specialist. But as morning broke, those niggling second thoughts began to multiply, and reached critical levels as the car was lifted into the air before Olly Stoner, proprietor of



▷ New wheel bolts have helped spruce up the alloys no end.

▷ Old Mercedes filter, new filter from supplier at half cost.



PCS, began poking around. "It looks a good one," he said while carefully checking the exhaust's mounting points. "We sometimes go with customers to inspect a car before they buy it, and we often find things that put them off. But we would have told you to buy this one," he added. I took a deep breath of relief following several seconds of air starvation.

Connection to a diagnostic machine revealed nothing bar an old camshaft sensor issue. Had it been current, our AMG wagon would face difficulty starting from hot, which it doesn't.

There were some obvious points to address, though. One of the car's previous owners had somehow broken off a considerable section of the nearside front wheelarch liner, leaving a fluid bottle and even some wiring in full view. Elsewhere, the wheel nuts were showing heavy corrosion due to a total lack of surface protection applied at the factory, and the parking brake release handle was refusing to do its job properly.

DOWN TO BUSINESS

The solution to the latter issue was remarkably straightforward. Olly simply lifted up the rear seat bases to reveal a black metal panel screwed to the floorpan. With this removed, the parking brake mechanism was exposed and clearly devoid of necessary lubrication.

After a few good squirts of Metaflux torsion spray (a marvellous product, according to Olly) and lubricant, followed by several hard pumps of the parking brake pedal to spread the lube, all was back to normal – the release lever now operating with a satisfying popping sound. While the seat bases were raised, we also discovered an old, hand written shopping list that included bananas and superglue. Interesting...

During the process of fitting new wheel bolts, Olly saw fit to remove the rear wheels and fit new trunnion bushes located by the wheel hub, as he had



noticed the originals were seriously worn. They were so bad, in fact, they would have failed an MOT and may have been the cause of an intermittent creaking sound when the car passed over significant road scuff and speed humps.

More frustrating was the fitting of new wheelarch cladding. Eagle-eyed readers may have noticed the C55's nearside bumper section is not quite flush with the headlamp cluster, suggesting it's had a slight knock in the past. A dubious, near matte paint finish underneath the foglight further supported this idea, and all arguments against went out the window when Olly attempted to pull the bumper back into place to fit the new wheelarch cladding, and a botched filler job reared its head.

Previously applied to the very bottom of the bumper underneath the nearside foglight, the filler promptly crumbled away and left a three-inch crack. It needs plastic welding, but you can't see it unless you lower yourself towards the floor.

While the C55 was at PCS, it also seemed like a good time to get the big B service carried out – its imminence displayed in the instrument cluster every time we started the car. This service included 16 new spark plugs, which can take an hour and a half to



△ Metaflux helped loosen the stiff parking brake.

◁△ Creaking from the rear needed investigating.

◁ Our car's rear trunnion bushes were badly worn.



△ Parking brake mechanism under the rear seats.

fit, plus a new pollen filter. All said and done, we paid just short of £960 including VAT – £300 of that being the B service. Jobs still on the 'to do' list include replacing the crucial gearbox oil filter (due every 40,000 miles – we ran out of time on this visit) and fixing the front bumper. Never a dull moment! 🚗

▷ Damage to front bumper will need sorting quite soon.

▽▽ Changing the plugs takes around an hour and a half.

▽ The 362bhp M113 V8 has 16 spark plugs!



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SAYING GOODBYE

With a heavy heart, the 1993 300CE Cabriolet is released from the Hitchcock household, but not before a bit of soul searching

WORDS AND IMAGES **REED HITCHCOCK**

FACTSHEET

CARS 1993 A124 300CE Cabriolet/
2011 S212 E350 4Matic Estate

OWNER Reed Hitchcock

LOCATION Virginia, USA

PURCHASED Sept 2011/May 2014

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT The 124-series cabriolet embarks on a new life in Chicago



MY SERIOUSLY SHORT automotive attention span is no secret to long time readers of *Mercedes Enthusiast*. In fact, the revolving door of modern classic Mercs in my garage has become something of a recurring joke amongst readers, editors, and frankly even my own friends and family. Our 300CE Cabriolet has been different, though. This car has been with us for nearly three and a half years, which may be longer than any other car I have regularly reported on.

Before you speculate what happened, we didn't wreck it or anything like that. Nope, in the midst of discussions about the practicalities of child rearing responsibilities, new kitchens, and the fact that four cars for two drivers is a luxury which no longer makes much sense for us, my wife and I decided to sell it on. Actually, I suggested it, and with what may have been a tear in her eye (this was, after all, her convertible) she relented.

A CAREFUL KEEPER

The truth is that, besides the need for cash, we just haven't been driving the car – and it deserves to be driven. This became particularly obvious when I was recently cleaning out our very cluttered

garage and I went to move the cabriolet outside, and found its tyre pressures low and a (new!) battery slain by freezing temperatures. It prompted me to reflect on the fact that I've added less than 500 miles throughout all of 2014, and barely more than that in 2013. It also made me think that as much as we love the car, it's just too much money to keep tied up in a garage ornament.

Decision in hand, I dusted off my favourite eBay advert template and started adding the details of our trusted weekend cruiser. I detailed the fact that every electric option was fully functional – including the finicky fabric top and the seat heaters. I talked about the OE style 16-inch alloys with brand new tyres that replaced a set of aged 15s. I talked about the working air con and the rollover protection system that activates in a fraction of a second.

I even revealed the few flaws I could think of, such as the split seams in the rear seat, and the patch in the vinyl on the convertible cover. And as I wrote it all down, I realised that I had come to know this car far better than most others – beauty marks and flaws alike.

I was also reminded why we bought the car in the first place, primarily

because the 124 is one of the best made Mercedes in recent history. Second, with an original list price in excess of \$85,000 – the same as the 500E – these cars represent amazing value right now.

I am of the opinion that these cars are at the absolute bottom of their depreciation curve and they will start to come back in the near future. And as I thought about all of that, I almost ended the auction early to keep the car. But I didn't. Goodbye old friend, and enjoy your new life in Chicago.



△ An honest seller review did no harm – more good, in fact.

◁ One last glance at the 124 before it starts a new life in Chicago.

▽ Another flat battery due to cold weather – and a lack of use?



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WELCOME BACK

Together once more with the W123 200, Martin wastes no time treating its engine bay to a new coat of paint, and delves into the car's history

WORDS AND IMAGES **MARTIN BUCKLEY**

FACTSHEET

CARS 1967 W108 300SEb/1996 R129 SL320/1984 W123 200

OWNER Martin Buckley

LOCATION Gloucestershire, UK

PURCHASED Dec 2011/July 2014/Oct 2014

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT W123's bay repainted, SL in hiding, 300SEb treated to a day out



YOU MAY RECALL from last time (see the January 2015 issue) that I bought back my 1984 W123 200 – for the second time. It has an autobox and power steering like most of them, but also the rare electric sunroof. Reacquainting myself with its thick history file, I saw it has MOTs going back to 2001, plus all original handbooks and service voucher book, and was sold new to the National Westminster Bank, no less.

In 2011, I had the car fully sorted by W123 World – proprietor and 123-series car expert Mark Cosovich said it was the fastest 200 he had ever driven – and subsequently serviced by specialist Hansa of Cheltenham always with Mercedes-Benz parts, regardless of cost. There are also bills for £3,500 worth of upkeep by the saloon's fastidious previous owner who used it as his family car.

The main job since last time was repainting the engine bay to match the rest of the bodywork. This entailed removing all the ancillaries attached to the inner wings including washer bottle and various electric components. The headlights were also taken out so that the front panel could be painted.

It was initially suggested that painting the engine bay black would be an easier compromise because it might be hard to match the paint and get a good finish in cream, but I made the executive decision that, as we were going to all this effort, we might as well do it properly. It was all quite involved – as I knew it would be – and took more than a week to complete, but the results are worth it, as you can see. Thanks to Jon

Wills of Cotswold Classic Car Restorations for the usual efficient job.

ONTO THE NEXT

I then sent the car to John Wilce in Stroud (CCCR was busy this time), to sort out blemishes on the front wings and wheelarches. Looking through the history file once more, I was pleased to see that the previous owner had the 200 fully rust proofed in 2013.

Outstanding jobs now are replacing the wood trim around the heater controls and on the corner of the fascia next to the glovebox. The driver's seat feels harder than it used to, but I may just be imagining this, having been seduced by too many soft seats in modern cars recently.

The rubber seal around the boot aperture needs replacing (the original has disappeared altogether), and the

electric antenna makes all the right noises but refuses to go up. There is also an intermittent fault with the heater blower, which can be irritating when you want to demist the windscreen. I thought the engine detailing might have disturbed the electrics, but again looking through the history I see that there is a historic intermittent fault with the heater blower switch: a new one is £80 from Mercedes-Benz.

The SL320 is now clean and tucked up for the winter, as is the 300SEb although I did use it once in November for a photoshoot comparing it with a Lancia. Once again, it performed faultlessly but now its cold start solenoid has decided to die, which means starting from cold is a real chore.

The only other arrival is a black C219 CLS belonging to my friend Hermann who has run out of storage space; I find these one of the more attractive recent Mercedes models, with incredible turbodiesel performance, but I was surprised when he told me how little it is worth at seven years old.

△ The previous owner used this 200 as his family runaround.

▽ The W123's engine bay now matches the rest of the bodywork.



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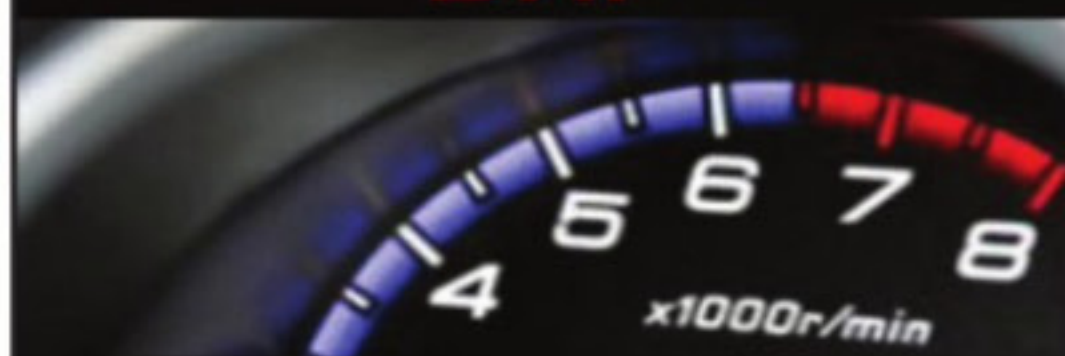


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280SLC, auto, 1981, currently on SORN, MOT to 19/06/15, 93,000 miles, factory sunroof, Alpine stereo, C/L, E/W, great car to live with but I'm told you can't keep them all! £5,750. carlines@clara.net for more info and photos. Tel: 07803 253299. Horsham [CDW15]



E220 Coupe, auto, dark grey with beige patterned cloth, FSH, MOT June 2015, three owners. Paperwork since 2000, alarm, sunroof, 10-stack CD player, very reliable, no work or repairs apart from service/MOT, paintwork in good condition, no rust. £3,295. Tel: 077962 85080. Wirral. [CDW13]

C220 CDI, 2001, estate in Jasper Blue, no MOT, needs automatic gearbox module, drives in one gear only (full garage written assessment) good condition. 160,000 miles, owned since 2002, beyond economic repair, needs Mercedes mechanic enthusiast can be towed away. £400. E: Paulmkitchen@Tiscali.co.uk Tel: 01985 847885. Wiltshire. [CD]

E430 Estate, 1997, seven seater, silver grey, leather interior, will not drive in forward gear, auto, still has MOT, spares or repair. £400. Tel: 01483 282861. Guildford. [CM11R]



E320 CDI Elegance, 2001, silver, 138,000 miles, MOT to July 2015, car performs very well, sizable financial contribution put into this car, many new parts, good condition. Tel: 07709 546748. Newtown Abbey, Co. Antrim. [CDW12]



SL55 AMG, 2003, 61,500, metallic black, leather, keyless, heated seats, air con, panoramic, Linguatronic, Comand, 19-inch AMG split rims, CD, FMBSH and specialist, new boot seals and battery, immaculate, no rust, no issues, HPI clear. £15,995. Email: powfoot@mac.com Tel: 0191 4211831. Gateshead. [CDW10]



W204 C220 CDI Sport, 2008, Iridium Silver, grey real leather seats, Halogen headlights, AMG wheels and mats, two owners, 47,000 miles, VGC, FMBSH, docs back to original purchase, MOT until Nov 15, MB Club member, Tel: 07963 157566. £11,850. See <http://goo.gl/GkRbgK> for more info. Colchester, Essex. [CDW9]



W123 230E, 1985, five-speed manual, blue cloth interior, non sunroof, 168,000 miles, MOT, new tyres, new brakes, four keepers, drives well. £2,300. Tel: 07786 589885 or 0151 4492822. Merseyside. [CDW3]



CLK63 AMG, 57 Plate, 33,000 miles from new, FMBSH, owned since August 2011 and done 13,000 miles in that time, MOT until Sept 2015, no advisories ever, full specification plus Harmon Kardon Logic 7, digital TV tuner, Bluetooth, heated and cooling seats (as new nappa), glass sunroof, electric rear blind, cornering headlamps, £24,500. Tel: 07833 418766. Camberley, Surrey. [CDW8]



SL280, 1999, 87,000 miles, includes T4 SVM private plate, finished in Tanzanite Blue metallic, with Helios heated leather, panoramic hardtop, a/c, e/w, e/m, e/s, FSH, wind deflector, 17 inch alloys cruise control, CD. £5,990. Tel: 07740 942001. [CDW6]



E220 Coupe, (1995), 78,000 miles, superb condition and kept in heated garage, Polar White with beige leather (rare colour combination) MOT until April 2015 - no advisories, alloys, central locking, air con, heated seats, illuminated vanity mirrors, electric driver seat, air bags, electric seatbelt presenters, electric mirrors, only selling due to space, it's a great car, drives beautifully and has been well looked after, very reliable car and low insurance. £4,795. Tel: 07904 766629 for more information and photos. Surrey. [CDW2]



C124 E320 Coupe, N reg, green with cream leather 58,000 miles, FSH, MOT until Dec 2015, car has had new windscreen, water pump and £2,000 worth of bodywork in last six months, amazing condition £11,995. Tel: 07774 245576. Slough. [CDW5]



190E, 2.0-litre, auto, 1993, Almandine, cream cloth, 77,000 miles, FSH, two previous owners, sunroof, immaculate original condition, potential concours winner. £3,950. Tel: 01803 551383. Devon. [CM11P21R]



E220 Coupe Sportline, 1995, Smoke Silver, 102,000 miles, Mushroom leather, air conditioning, AMG alloys, electric seats, FSH, old MOTs, waxoiled, MOT'd until November 2015. £2,750. Tel: 01953 600432. Norfolk [CM11P20R]



C240 V6, auto, Titanite Red, with cream leather, factory fitted tilt and slide glass sunroof, electric front seats, driver's memory, top of the range elegance, front and rear sensors drives like new, 2002 reg, two private owners, FSH, this car is in superb condition throughout with less than genuine 30,000 miles, next MOT and service October 2015, for further details please call. £3,995. Tel: 01803 526224. South Devon. [CM11P19R]



E320 AMG, replica E55, burgundy colour with cream leather, e/w, p/s, sunroof and blind, folding mirrors, stainless steel exhaust, private plate not included, petrol. £1,495. Tel: 07786 498400. Gloucester. **[CM11W17R]**



190, four-speed auto, 1986, full year's MOT, amazing car was owned by an old gentleman for many years, hence its incredible condition and low mileage of 38,000 miles, MB-Tex leather interior, power steering, electric mirrors, ABS brakes, centre arm rest, new battery. £2,950 OVNO. Tel: 07552 398647. Brighton. **[CM11W16R]**



450SEL, 1979, metallic red, only 79,000 miles, two previous owners, lovely service history, first bought by a wealthy sheik in 1979 only driven by his chauffeur for six months, then a Mercedes enthusiast had it for 26 years. Tel: 01663 762224 or 07710 611113. Manchester **[CM11W15R]**

C180 Elegance, 1997, manual, for spares or repair, MOT until October 2015, late father in laws car, needs to go, good solid car, just tatty paintwork, lacquer peeling, first £300 no offers. Tel: 07802 912514. Southport. **[CD]**
500SEL, 1991, two owners from new, current owner since 1997, leather seats, MOT until May 2015, a boardroom on wheels. £4,500. Tel: 01422 836668. Halifax **[CDP1]**



W111 220 Coupe, 1964, four-speed manual, full new genuine leather, ivory wheel, full wood dash, show condition. £34,995. Tel: 01663 762224 or 07710 611113. Manchester **[CM11W14R]**



E300, petrol, silver/gold, just sailed through MOT no advisories, full leather, central locking, air con, alloy wheels, sunroof tilt and slide, excellent condition, door rubber needed, and a new key, 121,000 miles, three owners, hence £900 OVNO, photos can be sent. Tel: 07871 937041. Essex. **[CM11W13R]**



S320 L, LWB, stunning, 2001, picnic/working table, fridge, satellite navigation, petrol, FSH, two owners, beige interior, Emerald Black, half wood steering wheel, rear climate control, all possible extras, five-spoke alloys, 10 months MOT, six months tax. Tel: 07889 990094. Twickenham. **[CM11W12R]**



E300 D, auto, white blue cloth, factory fitted sunroof, tow bar, SORN, low miles of 140,000, restore or spares no time for work on it, photos at rdtodd@btinternet.com will include new painted front wings, £750 ONO. Tel: 07753 624492. Glasgow M73 Junction **[CM11W9R]**



SL320, absolutely stunning, Oct/1998, Obsidian Black, cream nappa leather, panoramic roof, one lady owner to 2010 (72,000) and 3,000 miles since by myself, xenon headlights with headlight wash, all spare keys and handbook pack, service history, original sales brochure, 'Build Data Card', always garaged, FSH, price £10,500, for 12 photographs and detailed specification please email lesliewedge@hotmail.co.uk or phone Leslie. Tel: 07720 916125. Glasgow. **[CM11W11R]**



SL280, 1997/R, five-speed auto convertible, 95,000 miles, mine nine years garaged and mostly summer use, FSH and excellent condition mechanically and bodily, no rust, high spec including hardtop, power heated seats, full leather, ring for details, appreciating classic, fast when you want it, docile when you don't. £5,500. Tel: 01737 557353. Surrey. **[CM11W10R]**

C180 Kompressor, possibly the lowest mileage 2004 C180 in the UK, 12,600 miles, from new and in mint condition with history and one previous owner, silver/grey cloth interior, stunning car, £6,500 ONO or part exchange but Mercedes only. Tel: 01282 547675. Lancashire. **[CD]**

SLK320, 2001, bright yellow, 115,000 miles, fully documented miles, one previous owner, excellent condition, plus it comes with the registration number '32SLK' (3.2 SLK) valued at around 10K, would like serious offers in the region of £13,500, call Gary for full specification. Tel: 07990 524048 or 01692 630006. Norfolk. **[CM11R]**



E320 CDI, for sale, year 2000, long MOT and tax, FSH, 170,000 miles, excellent all round condition, no rust, waxoiled, garaged, and well looked after, first to see will buy, £1,995 OVNO. Tel: 0208 6604538 or 07584 020272. **[CM11W8R]**



220b, year 1965, one family owner, 93,000, no rust stains, engine in perfect condition, drove from Portugal-London with no problems at 32mpg, left-hand drive, viewings and honest offers on the following email, by appointment only, ferreiraries@aol.com West London. **[CM11W7R]**



320TE-24, auto, custom built 1993 by Mercedes, racing suspension, rust on front wings, needs overhaul, 250,000 miles, one owner for 20 years, history available, MOT and tax until April 2015. £2,000 ONO. Tel: 07957 312723. London. **[CM11W5R]**



W108 300SEb, saloon, rarest W108 variant, only 40,000 miles, RHD, lovely original car with full black leather, automatic, much recommissioning work done, all books and history, very special. £20,000. Tel: 07798 797262 **[CM11W4R]**

Mercls for sale



W123 200, auto saloon, beautiful condition, full history, drives perfectly. £4,800. Tel: 07798 797262 [CM11W3R]



190E, 1.8 litre, five-speed manual, showroom condition, 1991, totally immaculate, Zender bodykit from Germany, 17-inch alloys, recently professionally lowered by German tuner, excellent tyres, sunroof, central locking, 127,500 miles, £1,395 or £1,695 with new MOT, no offers. Tel: 07593 880630. North London. [CM11W2R]



380SL, 1984, auto, turquoise blue with beige check interior, hardtop included, three owners, always garaged, great investment, with cherished numberplate 'DNL 921', FSH, 78,120 miles MOT until 21/7/15. £18,500 with numberplate, or without £15,500. Tel: 0208 6864776. Croydon. [CM11W1R]



E240 Elegance, auto, black, four-door saloon, 1999, 277,000 miles, automatic, one owner, automatic, service history, 12 months MOT, new springs and disc pads all round, new stainless exhaust, all usual Mercedes extras, no advisories on new MOT. £695. Tel: 01273 831825. West Sussex. [BCW11R]



E220 Cabriolet, 1996, Smoke Silver, 110,000 miles, long MOT and tax, MBSH, Beige leather, aircon, fantastic all-round condition. £3,900. Tel: 01302 530665. Doncaster. [BCP9R]



300SL, 1991, 89,000 miles, MOT June 2015, upgraded air con, auto fluid and filter changed, good exhaust, tyres, oil filter changed yearly, clean engine, bodywork, inside and underneath exhaust, club member, always garaged. £6,500. Tel: 01395 515132. Sidmouth, Devon. [BCP8R]



C280 Elegance, 1994, petrol, excellent runner, 160,000 miles, genuine, walnut dash, leather interior. £2,500 ONO. Tel: 07860 419137. Leicester. [BCW6R]

C200 Elegance, 1994, auto, two-owner car with all history, 44,000 miles, looks and drives like new, metallic grey with blue cloth interior, never had damage or paint, as clean underside as on top, tools etc. Never used, bought a C180 Coupe, offers around £2,000. Tel: 01282 547675. Clitheroe [BCR]



Rolls Royce, Silver Shadow Series 1, 1973, this car has been very well maintained by previous RR club owners. g.glen-whr@sky.com £8,995. [CM11W18R]

OVERSEAS MERCEDES



220S, this splendid 220S Coupe RHD delivered to its South African owner in 1958, this is a matching numbers car finished in the original combination of black over tan leather interior and Zebrano wood trim, the vehicle is located in Johannesburg, South Africa. £95,000. Tel: 0027 8399 66407, Johannesburg South Africa [CDW14]



300TE, 1992, white wagon for sale, classic family car, seats seven, six-cylinder, 224,000 miles, second owner, well maintained, garaged, alarm system, power seats, sunroof, we have loved this car for 12 years, our kids are grown and now we are looking for a smaller car. 001 360 6072614. Camas, Washington. [BCW12R]



280SL, 1970, Signal Red with Palomino two tops, fully restored, books and records, rare four-speed transmission. \$65,000. Tel: 001 201 5677224. New Jersey, USA. [BCP10R]

PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES

Parts 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. Tel: 0208 660 4538 or 07584 020272. [CM11R]



For sale, four early white hub caps in good condition edges scuffed. £60 postage will be at cost or collect from Surrey, no returns. Tel: 01737 354177. Banstead Surrey [CDW11]



For sale, two Mercedes ML alloy wheels c/w tyres for sale (W164 model) very good condition, no kerbing marks and plenty of tread left on part worn tyres, buyer to arrange collection from West Bromwich area. £150 for the pair. Tel: 0121 3539281. West Bromwich. [CDW4]



For sale, new, genuine, 16-inch Mercedes alloys, including tyres, set of four, taken off 2014 C220 estate, tyres only rolled four miles home from dealership, buyer collects. £900. Tel: 07833 466843. North Wales. [CM11W6R]

For sale, over 100 Mercedes diecast model collection, also radio controlled models and battery operated models, £700, sold as one lot, send for list. Tel: 07500 377000. Sleaford Lincs. [CM11R]

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For sale, from 2012 SL63 as new, rear under bumper diffuser original black, also front foglights with black mesh surround as new, also four centre wheel caps. £150 the lot, won't split. Tel: 07929 639395. Claygate Surrey. [CD]

For sale, tyres 2x Pirelli P Zero 255/40ZR18, almost brand new with 8mm tread and 2x ContiSport 255/40ZR18 with 7mm tread, best offer over £400 secures or split appropriately into pairs, buyer collects. Tel: 01256 469893. North Hampshire (off M3 Jnt 6) [CD]

For sale, as new, 4x wheels from a 2006 CLK270 CDI, have been stripped and powder coated by well known Aerocoat at St Olaves. 2x 16x8in et32. 2x 16x7in et37. £350. Collection preferred or arrange own. Tel: 01493 750183. Norwich [CD]

For sale, small collection of MB diecast models, mint, boxed, for sale singularly or together please email: greenmx5@btopenworld.com [CD]
Breaking Mercedes sports, 113 and 107s. Tel: 01322 669081 or 07836 250222 [ABC]

NO. PLATES

7255 ML

7255 ML, on retention, £1,850. Tel: 01274 483036 or 07771 658544. Bradford. [CD]

6498 RU

6498 RU, number on retention, assignment fee paid for quick sale bargain. £950. Tel: 01803 551383. Devon. [CM11R]

A350 CLK

A350 CLK, on my CLK at present, best offer please, phone Ian, Tel: 01934 712713. Wedmore. [CM11R]

PK04 SLK

PK04 SLK, on retention £399. Tel: 01934 419050 or 07881 847915. Weston super Mare. [CM11R]

F14 JLS

F14 MLS

F14 JLS and **F14 MLS**, Jag or Mercedes luxury saloon/sport, £1,000 the two or £600 each, both on retention. Tel: 07500 377000. Lincolnshire. [CD]

WANTED

Dealer promo, model info, price list and sales brochures for the R230 SL500, post August 2008 facelift model, before introduction of R231 model. Tel: 01256 469893. North Hampshire. [CD]

Pair of mudflaps, to fit pre facelift W203 Elegance saloon - part no. B66528205. Tel: 01248 672612. Anglesey. [CM11R]

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“We hammered the 300SL as fast as were dared through the afternoon and early evening”

EURO STAR

Faced with a round trip of 1,400 miles in a classic roadster, things could have gone very wrong – but Mercedes' cars have a reputation for superb reliability for a reason, as one journalist was reminded

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

IT IS ONE THING TO TAKE A CLASSIC CAR FOR a gentle drive around quiet country lanes on a Sunday afternoon, then tucking it back up in its garage before nightfall. It is quite another to load one up with too much luggage, drive it fast and continuously to a destination 700 miles away, then drive it back again two days later, in between dashing to appointments in a tightly packed photoshoot and interview schedule.

But that's what photographer Eric Richardson and myself opted to do in 2012 when visiting two Mercedes specialists, Kienle and Mechatronik, in Germany. We could have taken a budget flight, or begged for an economical A- or C-Class from the Mercedes-Benz press department – but no, on a visit to renowned classic Mercedes-Benz experts, we were jolly well going to turn up in a classic Mercedes.

Trusting, the proprietor of The SL Shop near Redditch, Sam Bailey, lent us the 1987, 168,000-mile R107 300SL you see here, from the firm's hire fleet. It had been checked over and shod with new Michelins, but I made sure our continental recovery membership was up to date.

Collecting Eric from south east London early in the morning to catch our Eurostar crossing to France, I wondered if the idea had really been a good one, his multiple camera bags, lights and other photo equipment barely fitting into the boot and the small space behind the seats. But thanks to his very small clothes bag, we got all his stuff in, with a squash.

With so much distance in front of us, I couldn't help wondering if the heavily laden roadster was going to make it, and hoped Eric's roadside DIY skills would be as good as he claims they are. But the 300SL's straight-six, three-litre M103 – which might or might not have had the full 185bhp/188lb ft torque once claimed of it – did not miss a beat. It ran sweetly on the French autoroute, did not overheat in a prolonged traffic jam in Brussels, and was game for sustained 90mph cruising on German autobahns.

At a filling station in Germany, a kind man, possibly impressed with us being in his country in a UK registered German classic, patiently explained to me how to get fuel out of a petrol pump (you pay before delivery), a gallon of which the roadster was consuming every 24 miles. An added bonus was that because the weather was unusually warm and sunny for March, we

△ **Exclusive visits to specialists called for a classic Benz.**

had the hood lowered for much of the time, even on motorways, learning that this really is the best way to drive Mercedes' R107.

We also found out that heating and ventilation has come a long way since the SL was designed in the late 1960s, the system (which is without air conditioning) capable of blowing very hot or cold air, but no temperature in between. My numb backside also told me that the Mercedes' seats could have used better padding.

Business concluded, we left Mechatronik in Pleidelsheim, 20 miles north of Stuttgart, at 2pm and, keen to make it home that night, hammered the SL as fast as were dared through the afternoon and early evening to the Eurotunnel terminal at Calais. I arrived home in London just before the end of *Newsnight* feeling surprisingly fresh.

A few days later, I drove the 300SL back to The SL Shop, intending to enthuse to Sam Bailey that it had given absolutely no trouble. But I thought better of it – it's a Mercedes, and that much is expected, even after 26 years and 168,000 miles. 🏁

▽ **The R107 is not just a pretty face – it's a great GT car.**



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