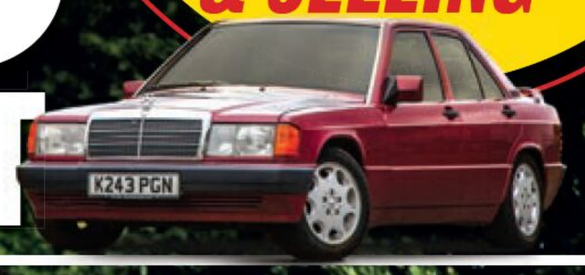
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Mercedes ENTHUSIAST



Issue 243
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"My gut feeling tells me low-emission zones are here to stay, and that we'll see more of them as time goes on"

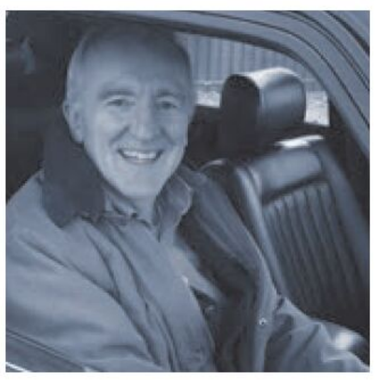
As I write, the realities of London's extended ultra low emissions zone are still sinking in for residents. The revised and further-reaching ULEZ is designed to reduce carbon emissions in outer London by an extra 27,000 tonnes and cut the amount of premature deaths brought about by toxic air. To avoid paying a daily charge of £12.50 every time they take to London's roads, petrol cars (as well as vans and minibuses) must meet the EU4 emissions standard, while diesel vehicles must be EU6 compliant. The situation has led to a mass sale, particularly of diesels – many of which are barely eight years old.

My gut feeling tells me low-emission zones are here to stay, and that we'll see more of them as time goes on. So where does that leave owners of older Mercedes? In London, two categories of what Transport for London calls 'historic' vehicles are exempt from ULEZ charges: all vehicles built before January 1 1973, and vehicles that are over 40 years old and have been registered with the UK's Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency for a historic vehicle tax class. Historic vehicles are exempt from Oxford's low-emission zone too, so it's not all doom and gloom for drivers of old Benzes. But I expect a glut of 20- to 30-year old cars being offered for sale in the coming months. It could be a great time to grab a modern classic bargain...



Kyle Molyneux
Executive Editor

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



Richard Mason
"Sixty years ago, two new Mercedes cars launched and sent shockwaves through the motoring world as they challenged the established order," explains Richard Mason, writer of this month's cover story. "Move over Rolls-Royce and bow to the best car in the world, the Grosser! A rock star wife tells us of her love affair with the Pagoda, and technicians and salespeople from the 1960s, plus owners share their experiences of these two iconic cars." The feature begins on page 20...



Ian Kuah
"I have never liked the looks of the facelifted R230 SL, its angry, aggressive face ruining the sleek roadster whose 2001 to 2008 iteration still looks good 22 years on," admits Ian Kuah. "However, the R231-inspired halfway house front end works perfectly on the SL65 AMG Black Series, whose pumped up wheelarches and rear wing give this limited edition autobahn stormer the demeanour of a thug in a Hugo Boss suit." Read about a one-off example from page 50.

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▷ Four-wheel drive enhances acceleration.

The latest Mercedes launches, news and motorsport

News

New AMG GT

More power and improved practicality for Affalterbach's stunning new Coupe

There's a new Mercedes-AMG GT Coupe in town and it means business! Based on the SL Roadster's composite aluminium architecture, the second-generation GT is slightly longer than the old model and classed as a 2+2 with seating for up to four occupants. This arrangement is to satisfy customer demand, according to Mercedes. Unlike the previous-generation two-seater, this new GT is equipped with four-wheel drive and rear-axle steering. There's also AMG Active Ride Control suspension with active roll stabilisation, an electronically controlled limited-slip differential, plus active aerodynamics to further sharpen driving performance.



Driving modes can be changed via a rotary dial on the steering wheel.



The newly added rear seats are suitable for people up to 1.5m tall.

Two versions of the GT have been confirmed and both run AMG's four-litre V8 biturbo engine linked to a nine-speed AMG Speedshift MCT 9G gearbox with wet start-off clutch. The GT63 4Matic+ Coupe packs a 577bhp/590lb ft punch for a 3.2-second 0-62mph time and 196mph top end. Meanwhile, the GT55 4Matic+ Coupe puts out 469bhp/516lb ft for a 3.9-second 0-62mph time and 183mph vmax. Both run the same 20-inch wheels as standard, which enclose 390/360mm front/rear composite brake discs.

Measuring 4.7m long, 1.4m tall and 2m wide, both models weigh in at 1,970kg, which is 305kg more than the first-generation (523bhp) GT Coupe. AMG is making a big song and dance about the new car's suspension, which comprises a multi-link front axle with five links arranged entirely within the wheel rim. This setup is paired with a five-link rear axle.

The new GT follows the SL's 'hyper analogue' interior design, with front seats split by an 11.9-inch touchscreen display for the MBUX infotainment system. There are six drive style programmes (Slippery, Comfort, Sport, Sport+, Individual and Race), and no less than 64 interior ambient light colours to choose from. The new (foldable) rear seats are suitable for people up to 1.5m tall, and behind those is a 321- to 675-litre boot that trumps the old GT's meagre 175-litre luggage space.

Pricing wasn't confirmed at the time of writing, but expect AMG's new and superb looking GT Coupe to start at around £150,000 and go on sale later this year.

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Facelifted SUVs

Mercedes-Benz has provided details of the mid-life upgrades for its EQA and EQB electric SUVs. The big news for those interested in the EQA is an increase in range from 264 miles up to 324 miles (spec dependent).

From the outside, you'd be hard pushed to tell the difference between these new versions and the old ones, but there is a new grille design and front bumper, as well as revised tail lights. The EQB can now be specced with a trailer hitch providing towing capacities of 1,400kg and 1,700kg depending whether in front-wheel drive or 4Matic form.

Inside, designers have added the latest generation of steering wheel with touch panels, plus new trim with Mercedes pattern, and the new version of MBUX infotainment controlled by large central touchscreen. The optional Burmester surround sound system now features immersive Dolby Atmos, and driving assistance systems boast improved sensor technology.

The facelifted EQA and EQB can be ordered from autumn 2023 and will arrive at European dealers at the beginning of 2024.

▽ EQB's range unchanged, but EQA's increased.



▷ Fresh new trim designs and the latest MBUX setup.

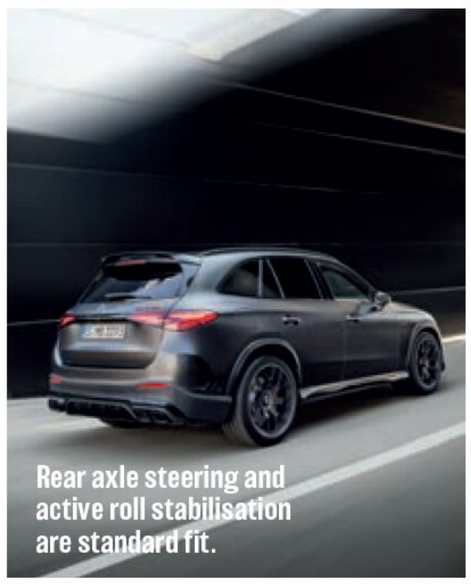


AMG GLCs

The new AMG GLC63 S E Performance is a plug-in hybrid model combining a 469bhp four-cylinder turbo with 201bhp (150kW) electric motor and high performance battery. System output, says AMG, is 671bhp! Four-wheel drive and a nine-speed automatic help this bulging rocket ship accelerate from 0-62mph in 3.5 seconds and top out at 171mph. Electric range, meanwhile, is 7.5 miles, the battery more about boosting performance than anything else...

If that's all too much for you, AMG also offers a two-litre, four-cylinder GLC43 4Matic producing a still handy 415bhp/369lb ft torque for a 4.8-second 0-62mph time and 155mph top speed. UK pricing was not confirmed at the time of writing.





Rear axle steering and active roll stabilisation are standard fit.



GLC43 four-cylinder has a 31/69 per cent front/ rear torque split.

News in brief



BONHAMS|CARS

△ PININFARINA COUPE

The world's only Pininfarina-bodied 300SEL 6.3 recently sold in a mid-August Bonhams auction for $350,000 (around £275,000). The 2+2 Coupe from 1969 has spent its life in the Netherlands.



BRABUS

△ TRIBUTE TO FOUNDER

Brabus has created a special 750 Bodo Buschmann Edition '1 of 25' model as a tribute to its founder. Based on the SL63, it features a 740bhp V8 with Brabus turbos, an aggressive bodykit, Monoblock II Evo forged wheels and a bespoke luxury interior.



△ NEW CHARGING HUBS

Starting in October, the first high-power Mercedes-Benz Charging Hubs will go into operation in Atlanta (USA), Chengdu (China) and Mannheim (Germany). By the end of 2024, Mercedes aims to have over 2,000 high-power charging points online; by the end of the decade, there should be 10,000 charging points available.

▽ OHME PARTNERSHIP

Mercedes-Benz UK has chosen smart-charging company Ohme as its official new home charging partner, alongside existing partner Pod Point. The new collaboration will see Mercedes-Benz recommend Ohme chargers to customers who need a home charging solution.





Best of Show

A Mercedes-Benz 540K Special Roadster (W29) won the prestigious 'Best of Show' award at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance 2023 on August 20.

The 540K Special Roadster was originally ordered in May 1937 for Mohammed Zahir Shah, King of Afghanistan, and delivered in September of the same year. The Special Roadster with a Sindelfingen body is characterised by the high side line of the doors, curved body contours with a recessed radiator, and a flowing rear end with concealed spare wheel. After only five changes of ownership in seven decades, the current owner purchased the vehicle at auction during the Pebble Beach Automotive Week in 2022, for $9.9 million.

Following the auction, the 540K Special Roadster was restored to the strictest standards of authenticity by RM Auto Restoration in close cooperation with the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center.

History

The order documentation in the Mercedes-Benz archives and other documents recount the first steps of this 540K Special Roadster: the exclusive vehicle was ordered by the Afghan royal court in 1937, and delivered in the autumn of that year. In the mid-1940s, the French-educated monarch brought the vehicle to the Afghan embassy in Paris. The supercharged sports car arrived in Great Britain in 1950 as a gift for his son-in-law, and was sold to a US collector in 1953. Throughout its long and varied history, the 540K Special Roadster has always been maintained and preserved in authentic condition. To date, the vehicle has only very few miles on the clock.

The current owner is Jim Patterson. The winners of the 'Best of Show' at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in 2015 (Isotta Fraschini Tipo 8A Worblaufen Cabriolet, built in 1924) and 2010 (Delage D8 S de Villars Roadster, built in 1933) also come from his collection. The most recent Mercedes-Benz automobiles as winners of the 'Best of Show' award were Arturo and Deborah Keller's Mercedes-Benz 540K Autobahnkurier in 2021, and Bruce McCaw's Barker-bodied Mercedes-Benz Type S Touring Car in 2017.

The Untertürkheim plant produced a total of 760 chassis for the 500K and 540K models of the W29 series between February 1934 and November 1939. Just 354 had the five-litre engine and 406 the 5.4-litre engine used from 1936 onwards. Nine body variants were available, confirms Mercedes-Benz Classic. They were completed at the Sindelfingen plant's special vehicle workshop. About 60 units of the variants with roadster bodywork were produced.


There are interiors, and then there are interiors of pre-war Mercedes.


Hailing from 1937, this 540K Special Roadster is owned by Jim Patterson.

TALKING POINT



This month's Talking Point...

What is your favourite Mercedes-Benz of all time?

"If I had to choose one, it would be the W126 S-Class." **Greg DeSena**

"560SEC AMG Widebody." **Tobias Ueberschaer**

"W116 S-Class. The mix of styling, ride comfort and handling, and the beginning of practical technology." **Steve Holder**

"My favourite Mercedes is a 1961 220S which I had at one time. We also had a 1956 180 with side-valve engine." **Kin Toon**

"The 300SL Gullwing and W100 600 Grosser." **Roberto Marquez**

Take part in **Talking Point** every month on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. See the bottom of page 3 for our respective websites!

Merc Spotter



"A red, late W124 parked on the street is not a big deal here in Germany," explained Benni on Instagram (@petrolpunx). "But while passing by I noticed that it was almost full spec." At this point, Benni realised the car's significance. "Everyone screams for a 500, but you can have a 400 model or later E420 V8 like this. It doesn't look different to any other 124 and could be your neighbour's diesel."

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.





Selected cars from the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Long Beach, USA and the M-B dealer in Thousand Oaks, including several generations of SL, a CLK Black Series, a 300SEL 6.3 and S-Class Cabriolet, recently took part in an adventure organised by Mercedes-Benz USA and Mercedes-Benz Heritage to coincide with Monterey Car Week.

IMAGE MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG




450 SL
300 SEL 6.3
280 SL
300 SL

Recalling trailblazing Mercedes-Benz cars of yesteryear



“The quagmire hardware and electronics were sophisticated and greatly in excess of what some ‘soft roaders’ of the time expected to get away with”

W164 ML

The second M-Class debuted in Detroit in 2005 and went on to become a big seller in the SUV sector, with over a million sold during its tenure

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **TERRY OBORNE & MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

After launching its first ‘passenger’ off-road vehicle, the 1979 G-Wagen, or Geländewagen, Mercedes-Benz waited nearly two decades before introducing the second one, by which time the market had evolved from heavyweight utilitarian 4x4s essentially designed for the farmyard to ‘lifestyle’ vehicles that drove more like a car than a truck. The W163 M-Class, built from 1997 until 2004, was a worthy vehicle that served the company well, with 647,738 rolling out of factories in Tuscaloosa in the US and Graz in Austria. But it was not the consummate ‘Chelsea tractor’, early examples blighted by surprisingly poor build quality that even a later facelift could not completely eradicate, while it was totally eclipsed in driver appeal by the svelte BMW X5 which arrived three years into its life.

In those years, the constantly strengthening Munich neighbour tended to spur on Mercedes, and the all-round appeal of the X5 must have been benchmarked in Stuttgart for the W164, because what was unveiled at the Detroit motor show in January 2005 was enormously improved in every way – not least in appearance, the dumpy original giving way to a modern and well-proportioned wagon that personified, perhaps even redefined, the prestige SUV. Knightsbridge kerbsides eagerly awaited the W164’s UK arrival, which came in September 2005.

Besides the distinctive visual transformation, it moved from the W163’s separate ladder chassis to a monocoque construction for greater torsional stiffness. In petrol form, the W164 came as the 3.5-litre petrol ML350, giving 268bhp/258lb ft, and the 5.0-litre V8 ML500 with 302bhp/339lb ft – but the key, best selling model of that pre-diesel gate era was the ML320 CDI using Mercedes’ then recently introduced OM642 three-litre V6 turbodiesel, in this form rated at 221bhp and 376lb ft torque. This was Mercedes’ best oil burning motor ever: punchy enough in performance to sideline the ML350, and with 35mpg plus available it made the ML500 look like an irrelevant gas guzzler, at least on this side of the Atlantic.

A further bonus was that the W164 was one of the new generation of Mercedes to use the 7G-Tronic seven-speed automatic gearbox, linked to a Direct Select gearshift on the steering column. Drive and reserve were selected with just the flick of a finger, without the need to take your right hand off the steering wheel – the perfect, effortless action that the owner of a premium Mercedes model might expect. And on that theme, the cabin was a big advance on the





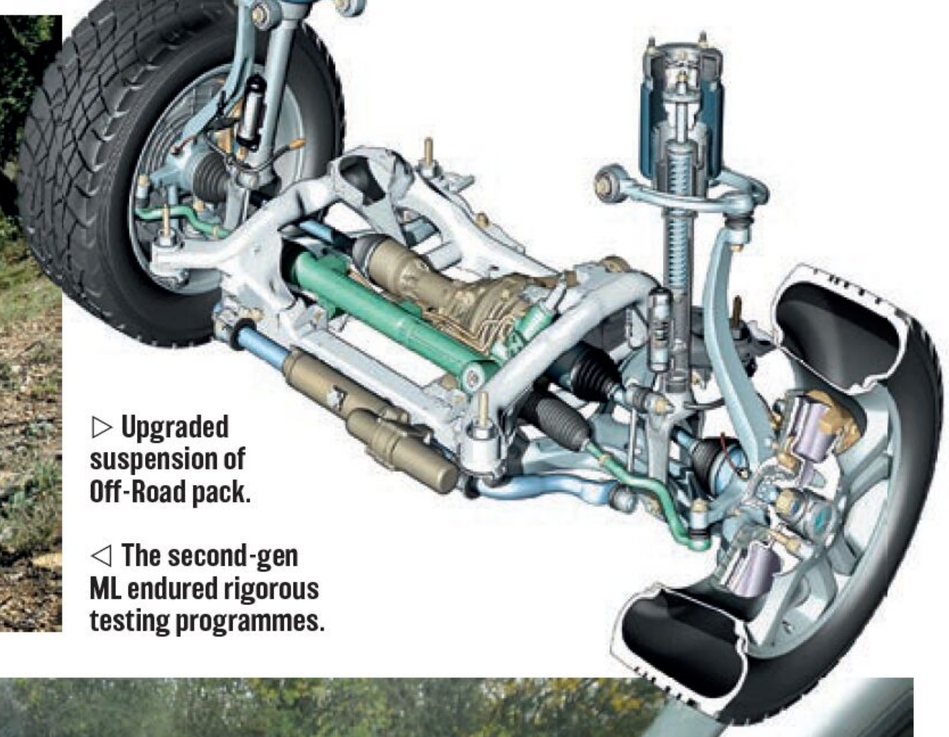
△ Three-litre V6 turbodiesel of popular 320 CDI.



△△▷ Lever for auto moved to the steering column.

▷ The M-Class is very practical and has lots of legroom.





▷ Upgraded suspension of Off-Road pack.

◁ The second-gen ML endured rigorous testing programmes.



Brilliantly comfortable seats; off-road controls below air con settings.

sober W163 interior, featuring a curvy dash, stylised, sunken instruments, and unusual grab bars each side of the transmission tunnel – plus quality of fit and finish in a different league to that of its predecessor.

The W164 was of course not the stop-at-nothing, all-terrain conquering 4x4 that its stablemate G-Class indisputably was and still is. But, as was to be expected from this engineering-led vehicle maker, the quagmire hardware and electronics were sophisticated, and greatly in excess of what some 'soft-roaders' of the time expected to get away with. Four-wheel drive 4Matic (with Downhill Speed Regulation, DSR) was permanent, and for those who wished it, the optional Off-Road Pro Package enhanced already respectable gradient approach/departure angles, gave more low speed control of the transmission in manual mode, and added a protective under guard.

AMG had made a good fist of sharpening up the intrinsically limited W163, and Affalterbach's take on its successor was eagerly anticipated. It arrived less than a year after the mainstream models. Whereas the hot W163, the ML55 AMG, used the faithful, 5.4-litre M113 V8 for a bottomless supply of velvety torque, the W164 ML63 AMG switched to the new 6.2-litre M156 V8, the first engine designed from scratch by AMG and a barely disguised racing engine, in this form producing an outrageous-for-an-SUV 503bhp at a glorious 6,800rpm, plus 465lb ft at a peaky 5,200rpm. It was equipped with a seven-speed AMG Speedshift 7G-Tronic transmission, AMG-fettled Airmatic suspension and higher performance brakes, and wore 19-inch AMG wheels on 295/45R19 tyres, with 20-inch and 295/40R20s optional.

While the W164 ML was a fundamentally different vehicle to the W163, its rightness in almost every way not only left little scope for improvement at the 2009 facelift (new steering wheel, paddleshifters, Artico 'man made' leather, improved infotainment telematics), but laid the way for a noticeably evolutionary design for the W166 ML that arrived in 2012. Notwithstanding the under-the-skin upgrades, the body shape looked so similar that until familiarity set in, some would find it hard to tell old and new apart.

The W164 ML is now fading into obscurity, the survival rate affected by the high repair costs on this quite complex vehicle, and also by all of the diesels being too early to be London ULEZ-compliant. We owned a 2006 ML320 CDI for three years and miss it, rating it among the best cars we've had. Our particular example no longer appears on the government MOT check, so sadly I can only conclude it's now scrapped. A great model series, and one that put Mercedes-Benz properly on track in the SUV market.

Insight from a Mercedes-Benz tuning industry veteran

A matter of security

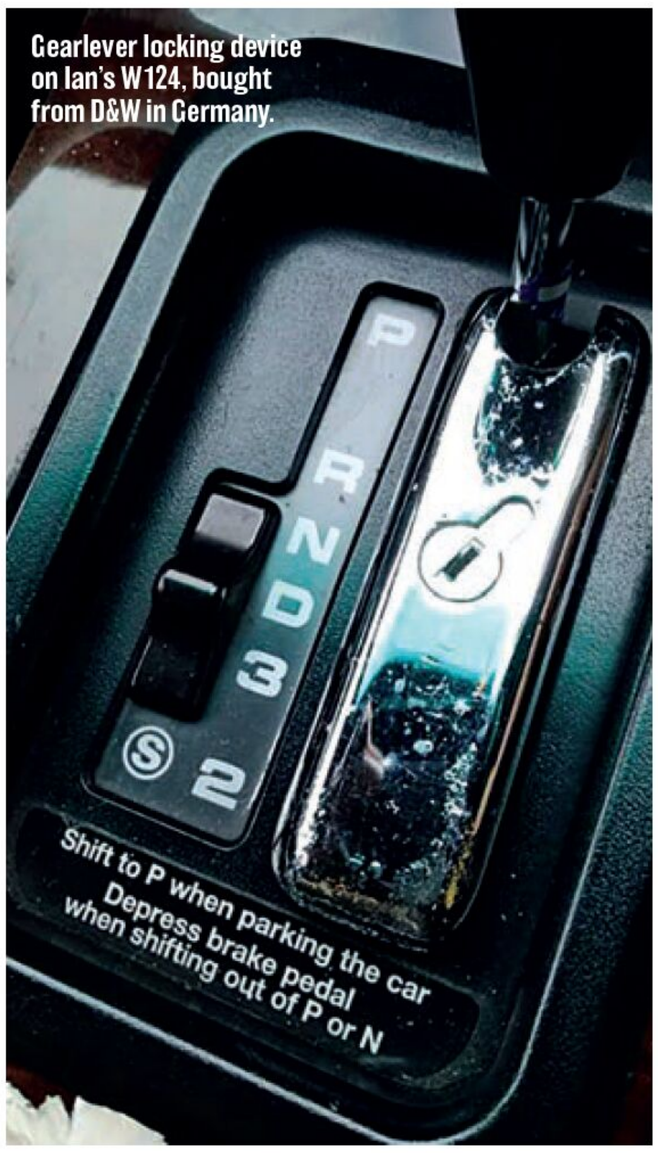


Car keys and modern locking systems are becoming ever more sophisticated, which is both a blessing and a curse, reckons Ian Kuah who delves into their pros and cons

Imagine you have reached home in the evening, parked your new Mercedes in the garage and are stepping out of the car when your kids run out to greet you. You close the garage door without locking the car and go into the house for the night.

The next morning when you try starting the car, you find that the battery is flat. So what happened? In the 1990s, turning off the ignition was enough to completely deactivate a car. A decade later you had to physically remove the key from the ignition to put the car to sleep.

However, these days you must also lock the car with the key fob in order to put all the systems to sleep so they do not drain the battery. That means just removing the key from the car and taking it away is no longer enough. The bigger problem is that some of the latest cars wake themselves the moment the key comes within a couple of metres. Thus, if you had locked your car but were chatting with friends in a car park and came close enough, your proximity will unlock it again. This activates the systems which will continue to drain the battery until you hit the lock button again.



Gearlever locking device on Ian's W124, bought from D&W in Germany.





Unfortunately, this is not something the dealer will disclose when you take delivery of your new car, and even if they did you might forget to pass the warning on to other family members who also drive the car. It's clear that the ever-growing mass of electronics on today's cars is fast becoming a weak spot for many reasons, not least of which are reliability and longevity. And then there is the not inconsiderable matter of security.

A widely known issue that has had a lot of media exposure in recent years is that modern, keyless entry-enabled cars are actually quite easy to steal. All a potential thief must do is use an electronic device that grabs the signal out of the air when you operate the remote nearby. It is also possible for professional car thieves to obtain key codes from dealerships if they have someone working on the inside, which the UK police discovered after many thefts of the first-generation BMW X5 when they were new.

With premium off-roaders a favourite of thieves who export them in containers, Range Rovers tend to go missing soon after a new model hits the streets. Anders Hedin, the owner of Hedin Bil, the largest Mercedes dealer group in Sweden, with a Range Rover dealership as well, told me that a lot of new Range Rovers were stolen in Sweden with one of his clients losing his car outside a restaurant while he was having dinner. The client replaced it with a Mercedes GLS from Hedin's dealership and had no more problems.

As far as deterring opportunist thieves is concerned, a physical impediment like the old-fashioned Stoplock or similar is very effective as it takes time and creates a lot of noise to defeat. Back in the 90s, I bought a very effective gearlever locking device for my W124 from the D&W car accessories shop in Germany. This slots into the gap through which the lever operates, effectively blocking a thief from operating the gearbox.

THE CURSE OF PLASTIC

When you open the bonnet of any current car, it is pretty obvious that more and more plastic is being used to reduce production costs. Pretty much every component around the engine is made from plastic these days, which is fine until it breaks. Plastic is a good material for air boxes and intake pipes, fuse boxes and engine covers, but when carmakers use plastic for working parts that undergo thousands of heat cycles during their lifetime this is a big issue when the material fails.

Plastic timing chain guide rail failure is a well-known problem in Mercedes engines, while Porsche's 996 Carrera and 986 Boxster used plastic T-joints in their cooling systems that are prone to failure. BMW water pumps used to have plastic impellers that broke, while Mini started using moulded plastic in place of metal for its water pump housings. Some owners have had more than one of these let go.

All of the above can result in catastrophic engine failures, so while modern cars in general are more reliable the accountants are forcing engineers to bake built-in weaknesses into new cars that could easily result in an uneconomical repair a few years down the line.

> **"All a potential thief must do is use an electronic device that grabs the key signal out of the air"**

IMAGE IAN KUAH

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

Built to last



Mercedes-Benz is making its most reliable cars since the 1970s, reckons David Sutherland, owing to the experience of running his own modern SUV from the Stuttgart carmaker

The product quality crash of the early 2000s that very nearly cost Mercedes-Benz its reputation as the world's foremost maker of prestige motorcars is no doubt still an all too recent memory for those involved with the German marque at the time. Even I can feel the pain as I recall the stories I had to write for the then recently launched *Mercedes Enthusiast* magazine, pushing the knife in deeper every time another disastrous customer satisfaction survey was released. I felt I had a ringside seat at the fast decline of a great company, and it was sad, even alarming to watch.

There seem to have been two causes: Mercedes' fast ramping up of production volume in the 1990s, and also the over-ambitious switch from analogue to digital engine management systems. But once the crisis was acknowledged, the carmaker actioned a root-and-branch review and things began to improve. Of course, lengthy motor industry lead times ruled out instant results, and it probably took a decade before we could see the results.

By the 2010s, Mercedes was building better cars. For me, the shining example of this is the 212-series E-Class, with its reliability good enough for it to be the taxi driver's choice. Of course, this was not covered in the press in the way that original problems were, but that's how the media works. Journalists like bad rather than good news.

But I'm pleased to be able to write that I think in these final years of petrol and diesel before the electric era begins properly, Mercedes-Benz is supplying possibly the best cars it ever has. I don't mean the traditional heavyweight build quality as in, for example, the 1970s 123- and 116-series whose doors shut with the solidity of a bank vault, but cars that run near faultlessly up to high mileage, and remain rattle free and fresh looking at that stage in life.

My conclusion isn't based on any consumer survey, but on experiences which I feel must be typical. Our 2017 GLC220d, which appears in this issue's Running Report section, is one example. It has now covered nearly 60,000 miles and, bar a set of new tyres and brake discs and pads all round, the only repair needed has been two front suspension arms. And given the many speed bumps in London the car has had to negotiate on a regular basis, it could be argued that the failure of these two very expensive bits of metal count as wear and tear.



△ This 100,000-mile E550 4Matic V8 saloon is proving very reliable in the hands of US-based Rex Greenslade.



△ The passing of a milestone moment for Rex's eight-cylinder.



△ Rex's E550 is the best car he's owned.

> **The shining example of this is the 212-series E-Class**

My other reference is a retired motor industry manager, Rex Greenslade, who has lived in the US for 40 years, and has covered 100,000 miles in his 2014 Mercedes E550 4Matic. In his earlier days, Rex was a motoring journalist who raced Triumph Dolomites in his spare time, so we can assume that he is quite demanding of his cars.

"I thought I'd never have a car that had done 100,000 miles, let alone one that still drives like new," Rex enthuses. "My E550 hit the magic mark this past week – it is, unequivocally, the best car I have ever owned, and one of the very best I have ever driven (and I have driven quite a few). Maybe the dampers will need replacing soon, but otherwise it runs like new. I hope it continues to deliver me as much joy, wonder and excitement for another 100,000 or so."

His E550 has seen extensive duty in America's extremes of temperature, from -5F (-21C) to 100F (38C). "It hasn't been babied at all, and if I do need to buy another car, it would take something remarkable to move to another brand," insists Rex, who worked for Ford for many years.

Mercedes-Benz has said that by the year 2030 it will be selling only all-electric cars in major markets, however its petrol and diesel models are likely to be phased out well before then. So, for new cars, this really is their last hurrah. It's too early to say for sure what the durability and long-term reliability of electric cars will be, but one thing is sure: a Mercedes-Benz from the last 10 years or so should – if it's been properly looked after – provide you with a great owning and driving experience, and will be a fitting finale to a century and a half of the internal combustion engine.

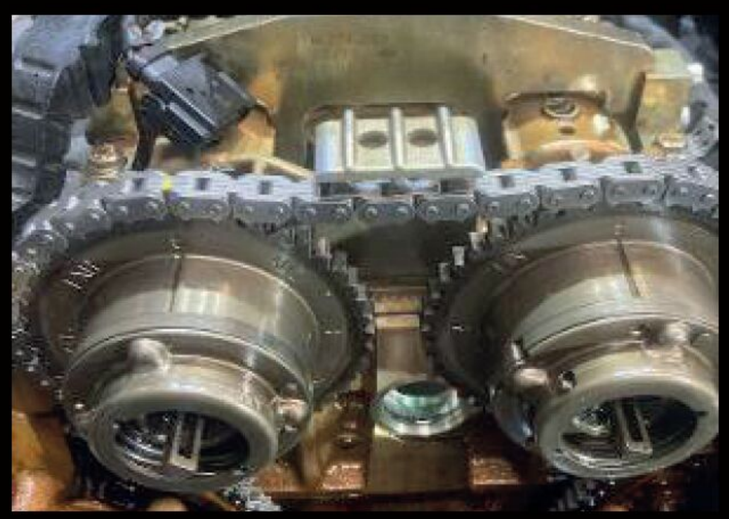
IMAGES REX GREENSLADE

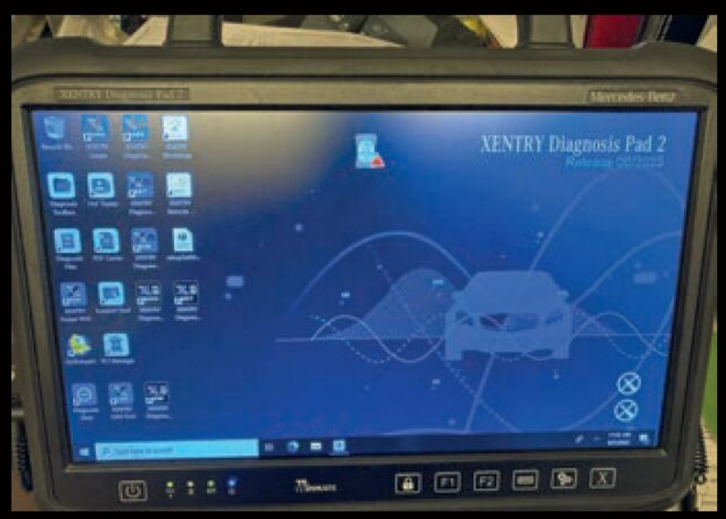
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Social Club

Mercedes-Benz related highlights from the world of social media



Noel Skeats Photography

@noel_skeats_photography

Mercedes-AMG GT R Pro at the Steeleford Hill Climb event @prescottspeedhillclimb on August 20 2023. *The Pro boasts a 577bhp V8, enhanced aero and upgraded suspension.*



Barış Türkay

@thevalleyofcars

Chic coupe.

This 140-series S500 Coupe is finished in stunning Onyx Grey (paint code 721).



Bonhams Cars

@bonhamscars

This 2008 Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren 'Crown Edition' will be offered without reserve at our Goodwood Festival of Speed Sale. It comes with various '722' model options, including an engine upgrade (650PS), and is showing circa 41km on the odometer.

This bright yellow supercar sold for £379,000 including Bonhams' buyer's premium.



Sven Håkon Voldum

@mercscapades

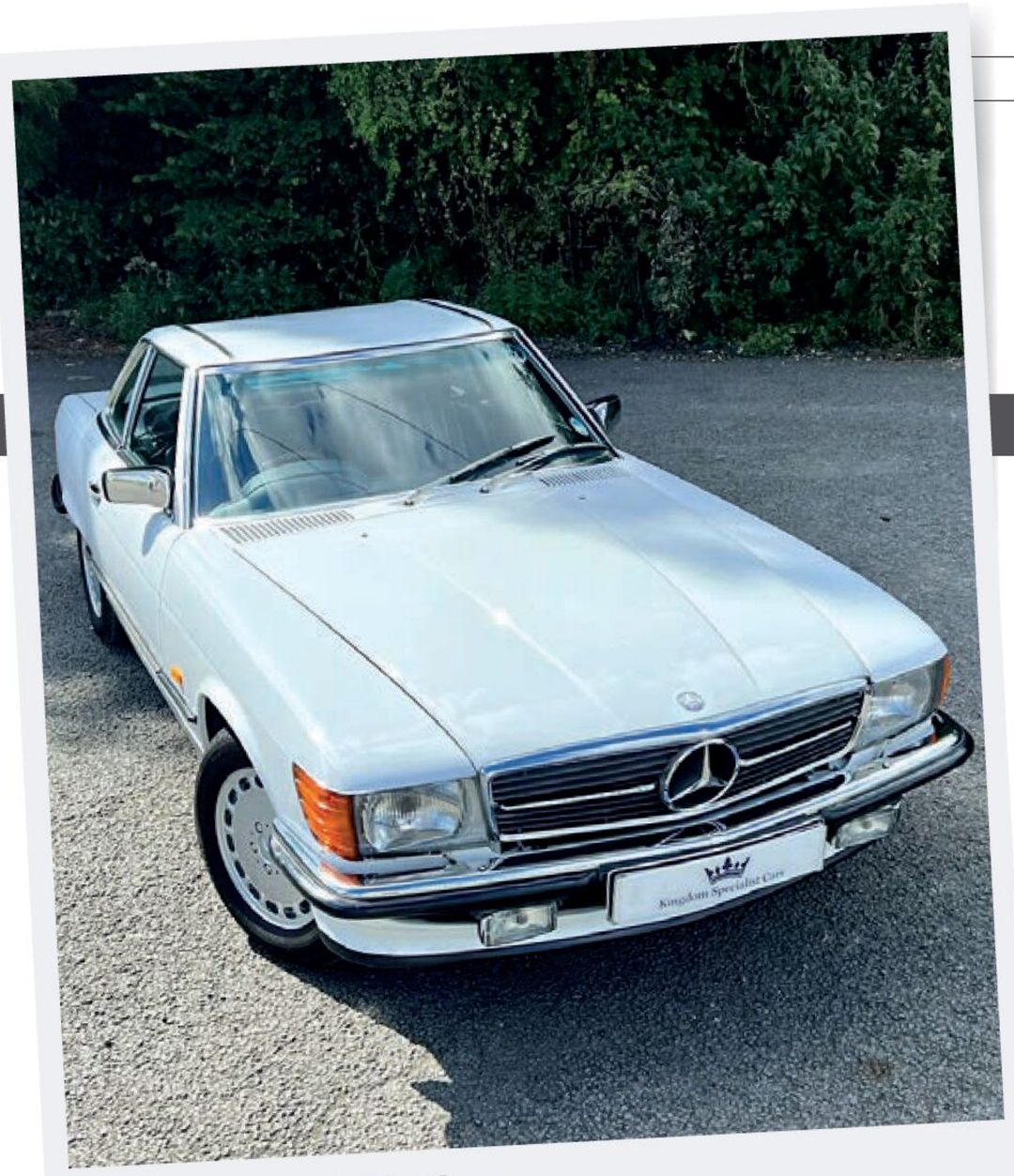
The Atlantic Ocean Road is an 8.3km-long stretch of road that covers an archipelago which for the most part has the Atlantic Ocean as its closest neighbour. In the background here is the largest of the eight bridges, the Storseisundet Bridge. Well worth a topless drive in sketchy weather!



The Mercedes-Benz Club

@themercedesbenzclub

Lovely dark blue W108 280SE at the club's visit to JD Classics. *Read more about this company on page 42.*



Kingdom Specialist Cars

Kingdom Specialist Cars Ltd
New into stock – this superb 1988 Mercedes-Benz 420SL is one of only 2,148 produced worldwide.
Finished in white over blue leather, this lovely V8 roadster has covered just 53,000 miles from new!



Steven Homer

@stevensfourwheels
I have to admit that this pair look quite good together at shows!
An R172 SLK200 and R170 SLK230 Kompressor are pictured side by side at Shelsley Walsh in Worcestershire.



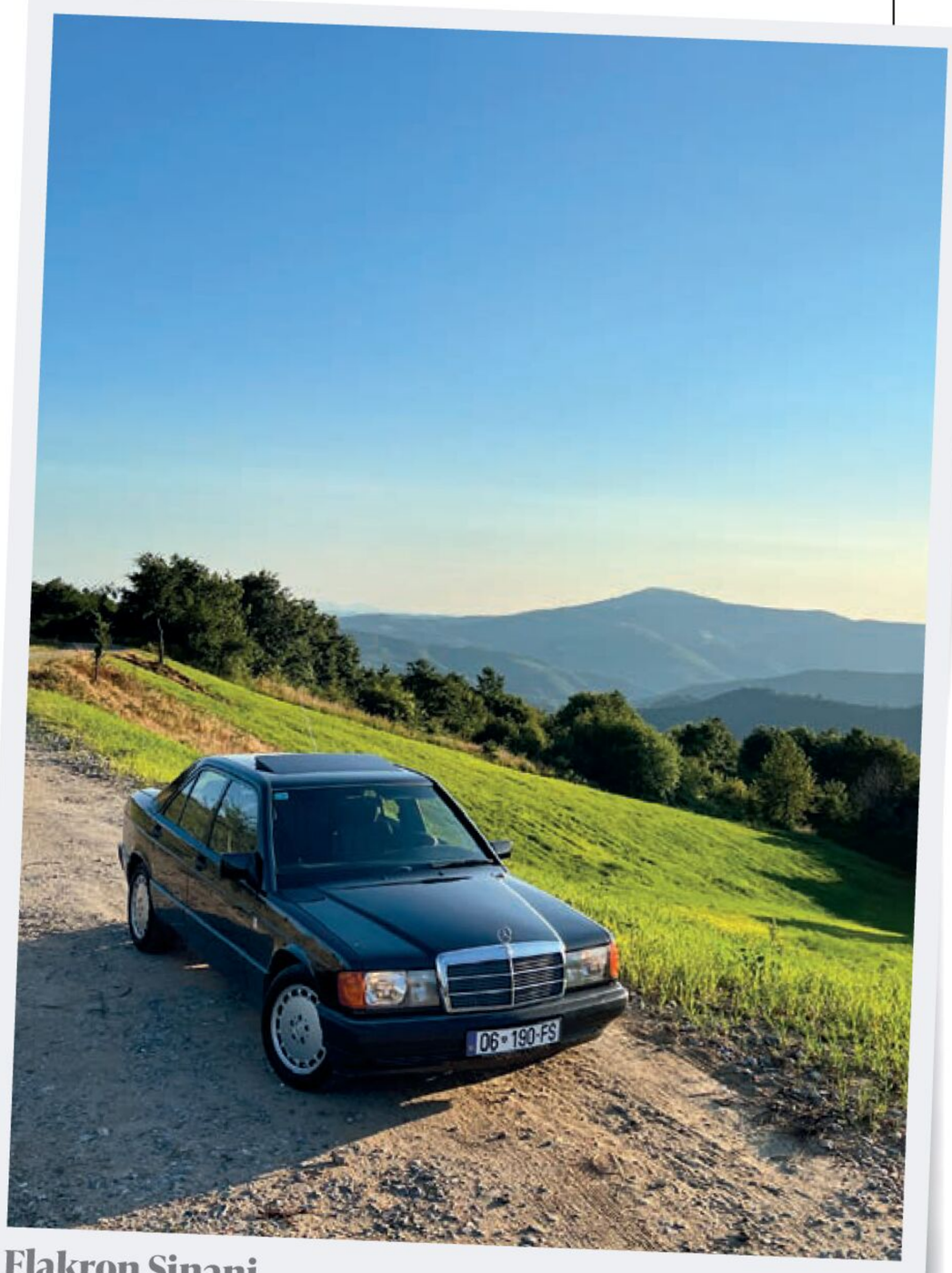
SPR Autos

@spr_autos_mercedes_specialist
Very nice condition W204 C63 AMG Edition 125 in for a PAS pump with bottle, belt and pulley kit, and a health check.



Paul Edginton

Our 124-series E320 Cabriolet and 126-series 560SEC are rare and definitely beautiful. However, our C140 is next level rare but not necessarily beautiful – though we love it. Both the 140 and 126 have less than 100,000km and are flawless, and our 124 is almost as good. The drive experience is different in each, but two things stand out: build quality and smoothness of the engines. The C140 is so silent it's like riding in an EV. Interesting though that the C126 handles much better, in my opinion.



Flakron Sinani

@flakron_w204
Routes of happiness.
Pictured is a W201 190D 2.5 finished in blue-black (blauschwarz).

Cover story

Little and large

WORDS **RICHARD MASON**
IMAGES **IAN SKELTON, EDWARD HALL, RICHARD MASON & MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

Mercedes Enthusiast brings together the pioneering W100 600 and revolutionary W113 SL sports touring roadster to celebrate their 60th birthdays, with exclusive insight provided by owners and marque experts

*"The 600 and the SL Pagoda **are united in their celebrity appeal** that's morphed into **iconic classic car** status"*

Sixty years ago, Daimler-Benz stunned customers with not one but two radically different replacement models – the W113 SL and the W100 600. Both were created under the direction of Friedrich Geiger, although Paul Bracq designed the W113's concave hardtop gaining it the nickname 'Pagoda'. The 600 also had a second name befitting its sheer size and technological scope – the Grosser Mercedes, which translates to Grand Mercedes.

Debuting in Geneva in March 1963, the W113 230SL replaced both the 190SL and the iconic 300SL. A brave move, but in other respects a safe one – the W113 was the first sports car incorporating a passenger cell comprising front and rear crumple zones. Another first was a four-speed automatic transmission option. Mercedes-Benz was really tearing up the sports car rulebook around this time…

Could a 230SL really replace a 300SL? Not according to actor Steve McQueen who'd owned a 300SL. After driving a 230SL automatic on a race track, his verdict was, "Underpowered for the money but an outstanding ladies' car." Nevertheless, Mercedes went on to sell almost 50,000 over eight years and not just to ladies. Astronaut John Glenn bought one, as did John Lennon.

Hard on the heels of the Pagoda, the Grosser broke cover in Frankfurt in September 1963. Its staid predecessor, the 'Adenauer' could have come from another century such were the 600's innovations. Mercedes' first V8 with hydraulics powering the boot, front and rear seats, sunroof, self-closing doors and two-speed windows – all of which operated noiselessly. Whirring electric motors had no place in the best car in the world. When it came to noise, the 600 had four horns. More firsts were door mirrors adjusted from inside, an automatically releasing parking brake, and an interior light with a delay of 15 seconds. The W100's massive street presence even overshadowed a Beatle musician. Pattie Boyd, ex-wife of the late George Harrison, remembers riding in his 600. "People would stare at the car and not see me and George inside. You just didn't see many on the roads," she tells us.



◁ The M100 was Daimler's first V8 with fuel injection.

▽ 600's power steering with 3.2 turns lock-to-lock.

▽◁ Controls run on a powerful hydraulic system.











△ W113 SL on display at the Frankfurth motor show in 1963.



△ SL and 600 roll along the Sindelfingen produciton line in 1964.

▷ Immense legroom in standard 600.

▷△ 2,190 of this type of 600 were built by Mercedes.



***"Hard on the heels** of the Pagoda, the **Grosser broke cover** in Frankfurt in September 1963"*

There's speculation as to whether the 600 made a profit given the investment to create it. "I've heard that story but never from anyone at the company," admits Jonathan Ashman, UK Car Product Manager for Mercedes-Benz at the time. No two 600s were quite the same and all were hand built in low numbers. Add to that the cost of a back office and servicing infrastructure too. Daimler-Benz was a world class manufacturer before the war and wanted that reputation back. The 600 was the vehicle in every sense of the word to achieve that. A car driven by celebrities and heads of state not only positioned Daimler-Benz as a world leading manufacturer, the 600 achieved priceless publicity on a global scale.

Whether or not it made a profit is missing the point, as the 600 was an investment in the company's status.

A different breed

The 600 and the SL Pagoda are united in their celebrity appeal that's morphed into iconic classic car status. Celebrities from now and then have fallen for both cars. Who can forget Jeremy Clarkson's green 600 on *Top Gear*? During his review, he said, "People who had a 600 almost always had access to an air force."

Indeed, many a 'Bond villain' has utilised a 600. But then again, actor Harold Sakata, who played Odd Job in *Goldfinger*, had a 230SL in real life. Pope Paul VI had a 600 Landaulet in 1966 with just one seat in the back. David Coulthard has a 280SL because it was made the same year he was born – 1971. Singer Joan Armatrading had a white 280SL for 15 years, which is way longer than Karen Carpenter kept her 600. Continuing the who's who of popstar 600 owners are The Who's Pete Townsend, David Bowie, Rod Stewart and Eric Clapton.



△ Pattie Boyd had an SL similar to this one in the 1960s/70s.



△ Ex Rod Stewart W100 600 Pullman complete with TV aerial.

Where the 600 upstages the Pagoda is the number of heads of state who had one. Mao Zedong, Pahlavi, Shah of Iran plus a whole slew of dictators whose names you mightn't want on the logbook. Film actress Audrey Hepburn used her 230SL in the 1966 film, *Two for the Road*, meanwhile it's unlikely Jack Nicholson used his own 600 in *The Witches of Eastwick*. In that particular film, a 600 is badly damaged when Jack flies out the rear window...

Unlike the 600, the SL Pagoda went through several incarnations, from 230SL to 250SL and finally 280SL. Whilst engine development was the main change other enhancements were made to brakes and trim. One enhancement that never went into production was fitting the 600's V8 to the somewhat underpowered 250SL. This project was quickly abandoned in 1967 when track tests exposed a prodigious appetite for tyres and poor stability. Instead, the 250SL was increased to 2.8 litres. ▷



▷ However, in the 1990s the Sultan of Brunei substituted the engines in his fleet of 600s with the new, six-litre M120 V12. The 250SL was optionally available with a coupe roof and rear bench seat (this spec was known as the 'California Coupe'). It had neither a soft top nor soft top compartment in order to accommodate the rear bench seat. Not to be outdone, a two-door Coupe version of the 600 followed some years later, although apparently only two were ever built.

The 600 remained unchanged throughout its production run being one of the longest for Mercedes at 18 years. 2,677 cars were sold. Standard body-sized 600s account for 2,190 units, while Pullmans make up 429 cars and Landaulet convertibles a mere 59. In contrast, the W113 sold in big numbers – 48,912 to be precise. The 230SL accounted for 19,831 units, the 250SL for 5,196 and the 280SL for 23,885.

These icons in waiting were inevitably compared with icons of the day, namely the Rolls-Royce and the E-Type. For the 600 it was no contest – no amount of wood veneer, lambs wool carpeting nor the Spirit of Ecstasy could make up for the technology crammed into Mercedes' 600, plus it was fast with great

*"Unlike the 600, the SL Pagoda **went through several** incarnations"*







△ Even this roof rack with ski bars is original!

△▷ Colour coded dash, and knob for five-speed manual.

▷ Just 19,831 of the 230SL model were produced.







◁◁ SL's original toolkit and 3pc luggage set.

◁ 6-pot of 230SL surrounded by 190C grey paint.

handling for its size. The SL was double the price of an E-Type yet arguably better built and more sophisticated. Fuel injection in the SL was standard while E-Type owners had fun balancing the multiple carburettors throughout the model's life. At its launch, the SL got a rough ride from some motoring magazines but by 1968 it was comparing favourably to the E-Type, as well as cars from Chevrolet and Porsche.

For special occasions

Taking us back to the 1960s are some of the people who sold, drove and maintained these fascinating cars. Derek Singleton worked in London and Kent as a Mercedes dealer, and developed a niche business for second hand 600s as well as supplying Pagodas. He even used a 600 on his wedding day. Derek takes up the story. "Back then, many dealers were cautious taking a 600 in part-exchange. They are a complex car with potentially astronomic repair costs during the obligatory three-month warranty Mercedes had to provide. However, my business partner and I were optimistic about the 600's reliability and we operated a niche market with them.

"Dealers would approach us to underwrite their part-exchange deal and we would buy the car," Derek continues. "One six-door Pullman we took belonged to singer Rod Stewart. It had a massive TV aerial on the roof just above the windscreen. Even more exotic was a Landaulet bought new by the President of Sierra Leone. When he no longer needed the car, his people decided to sell it in Britain, which is how I became involved. I think we suggested a likely price and the next thing we knew this was taken as a firm offer.

"I thought it would easily sell in the USA, so I directed my efforts there. But there was absolutely no interest. Luckily, Chrysalis Records was looking for a suitable car for David Bowie to ride around in during his European tour in 1976. The Landaulet was perfect with its hydraulically retractable rear hood, although we had to remove the President's badge from the sides.

"I'd had dealings with David Bowie before when he was interested in a Mercedes-Benz SL. I remember taking one to his home, I think in South London. The curious thing was he never came outside to see the car. He and what I assume was a girlfriend looked at it from their upstairs window and that was that. No sale," Derek recalls.

Pattie Boyd, aforementioned former partner of the late George Harrison, is in the rare position of experiencing a 280SL, 600 and a 600 Pullman. "In 1968, George and I chose a red 280SL. The same year, George bought a 600. ▷



△ Derek Singleton borrowed a W100 for his wedding in 1968.



△ Sierra Leone's President bought this Landaulet version in '74.







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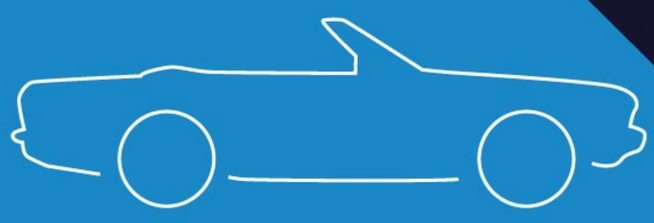
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▷ It really was his car as I found it too cumbersome to drive compared to my SL. I think the lines and overall appeal of the SL are something that only women really appreciate. It was my favourite car, a happy memories-making car, and I still like them to this day.

"Of course, comparing one with a modern Mercedes is unfair because cars have changed so much. I used to drive from London to our home in Esher with the hood down. It was so much fun. And a blonde girl in a red SL got lots of attention! When George lost his licence in 1971, I used to drive him around in the SL. In 1972, when George was back on the road, he sold the 600. Maybe because he was buying John Lennon's Pullman. Now that was even larger and much too big to drive around the streets of Henley where we had moved to. George used to take his friends in the car to the Hare Krishna Temple near Watford. I think he sold it around 1975."

Ex-Woking Motors Mechanic, Joe Salamone remembers the Pullman before George bought it. "John Lennon complained of a vibration in the car, so we took it for a test run up the A3 and he was right. It didn't take us long to diagnose flat spots on the tyres. John wasn't using the car often and three stationary tonnes of car will affect the tyres."

Joe recalls another incident when putting the Pullman on a ramp for inspection. "Unknown to me, the double TV aerial was underneath. If I'd known, I would've raised the air suspension for more ground clearance. Inevitably, the aerial was partially dislodged when it fouled the ramp. Luckily, I managed to fix the bent bits of metal."

Nic Moore remembers his time as an electrical technician at Mercedes-Benz Brentford during the time when the W100 and Pagoda were current. "We had a team just to service/repair 600s. It was quicker to have a centralised UK team given the low numbers of 600s around. It gave better customer service because the car was ready sooner. We also had experts from Germany visiting to guide us.

"There's speculation as to whether the 600 made a profit given the investment to create it"

"Working on a 600 was unlike working on any other car," Nic continues. "We had to wear overshoes, change into a clean coat, and a protector had to be put over the steering wheel. Anything that involved the dashboard meant putting masking tape on the veneer. The works foreman would come round every hour on the hour to check what was happening."

Just as well because the pressure in the hydraulic system is about 3,000psi. Another mechanic Martin Cushway comments, "At that sort of pressure it would take your thumb off, so you have to know what you were doing. Even when the engine is off, pressure is stored in the system to allow for the windows to be opened 10 times. So we couldn't work on a car until the pressure was reduced to a safe level. The pressure must be that high to operate all the components, which are actually small."



△ Joe Salamone with the late George Harrison's Crosser Merc.

By contrast, the Pagoda didn't need special teams and premises for its servicing schedule. A neat detail on the W113 is a dealer inspection lamp that plugs into a 12V socket in the bulkhead in case there's not enough light. No other Mercedes has this, not even a 600.

Two of a kind

Rumour has it that a 600 lapped the Nürburgring faster than a 230SL. In a more sedate fashion, on the old Brooklands race track, we sample a standard-wheelbase 600 with popstar provenance, and a 230SL from a farm in Wisconsin. The 600 was originally owned by Gordon Mills, manager of Tom Jones and Engelbert Humperdinck. In stark contrast, the 230SL was bought by farmer Edward Dauer of Filla Valley Road, Independence, Wisconsin in the Midwestern USA. The rugged rural environment with extreme weather forced Edward to specify many intriguing factory options.

Dene Crisp, model register captain for the W113 in the Mercedes-Benz Club, is now the lucky owner. "I bought this 1966 230SL from Edward's daughter. Its specification is possibly a one-off and I had to have it. Evidence of the options are on the invoice and data card. Chrome strips on the hardtop are needed for the roof rack, then bars for the ski holders. These options remain in place today, as well as the skis which are Edward's original ones.

"There's also a three-piece bespoke luggage set fitted snuggly inside the boot, kept in ▷

▷ place by a leather strap," Dene says. "Transmission is the optional ZF five-speed manual. Seats including rear jump seat are in leather. Steering is power assisted – another option. The original toolkit is with the car, too."

Dene has a mass of paperwork showing a meticulous log kept by Edward. It's a time capsule and in a rare colour code 190G grey. Dene highlights the options reflecting the SL's rural location. "Underneath are sump and gearbox guards. The air filter is an oil bath type, which is much more effective at filtration than a paper one. Battery is tropical specification plus there's a heavy duty heat exchanger. This is such an original SL. Following an engine rebuild, plus full paint correction and interior refresh, it's as good as the day it left the factory."

The long way home

Meanwhile, Geoffrey Hunter's 1965 600 has had two resprays, from Moss Green to Cyprus Green by its first owner Gordon Mills. Geoffrey comments, "I've met people who remember the car, including a mechanic who repaired the propshaft after it had suffered damage in the 1970s, maybe following an accident. Gordon possibly decided on a colour change at that point. Certainly, Cyprus Green was a 1970s colour which has a slight yellowish tinge. By 2018, the paint was bubbling so I arranged for Cardock of Dublin to do a bare metal respray restoring it to Moss Green metallic.

"The company discovered the sunroof had been retrofitted in June 1980. Moreover, it's electric not hydraulic," Geoffrey explains. "Upon stripping down the car, Cardock found a sticker on the sunroof mechanism with the date. It's curious Gordon fitted the sunroof 15 years after buying it. I'm the third owner and I bought it from a German enthusiast in June 2007. It took me three trips to see it before I finally plucked up the courage to buy it. On the 500-mile drive home to London, my eyes were glued to the instrument binnacle for any signs of an imminent breakdown. But there was nothing. It drove flawlessly. The mileage of 84,000 is genuine and I've used it almost continuously since I bought it, including for club trips to Frankfurt and Berlin.

"It's a challenging car to own, as there's always something that needs doing and this was exacerbated by a lack of use during lockdown," Geoffrey admits. "But it's great on long trips – it's such a joy to drive. As soon as you get it on the move, it seemingly shrinks in size. It's nimble, agile and brisk. One mystery is why its original registration was NAR 164C. It was registered in Brentford although 'AR' signifies Hertfordshire and '164' is the beginning of the VIN. Maybe NAR suggests 'Not Another Rolls', which of course is the car a more regular breed of successful people bought back then."

Our story ends where it started. Two Mercedes as fascinating now as they were 60 years ago. Maybe even more so...



△ Clever side window provides ventilation without buffeting.



△ Countless details make these classic dashboards special.

▶ *Thank you to Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey for the photoshoot location Web www.mercedes-benzworld.co.uk, and to owners Dene Crisp and Geoffrey Hunter for allowing us to feature their beautiful Mercedes-Benz cars*



*"It's great **on long trips** – it's **such a joy** to drive"*

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 600 (W100)

Engine **M100 6,332cc V8** Power **247bhp@4,000rpm** Torque **369lb ft@2,800rpm**
Transmission **4-speed auto, RWD** Weight **2,475kg** 0-62mph **9.7sec**
Top speed **127mph** Fuel consumption **15.9mpg** Years produced **1964-1981**

Mercedes-Benz 230SL (W113)

Engine **M127 2,306cc 6-cyl** Power **148bhp@5,500rpm** Torque **145lb ft@4,200rpm**
Transmission **5-speed manual, RWD** Weight **1,295kg** 0-62mph **9.7sec**
Top speed **124mph** Fuel consumption **27.7mpg** Years produced **1963-1967**

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 1965 standard-wheelbase 600 and 1966 230SL as pictured; fuel consumption determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 110km/h, 68mph) plus 10 per cent

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Mercedes offers a diverse selection of engines for the E-Class, all equipped with electrification

The next

Mercedes-Benz describes its brand new E-Class as a bridge between tradition and digitalisation. With a noteworthy history dating back to 1953 (regardless of what the vehicle was called), this model holds immense importance for the brand. It is expected to play a key role in Mercedes' ambitions to cement itself as a prominent player in the luxury automotive market well into the future.

A significant aspect of the future is electrification, which has also influenced the appearance of this latest generation. For instance, at the front of the car, a glossy black panel connects the radiator grille and headlights. This design element serves as a connection between the traditional combustion engined models and the fully electric EQ range.

Within this, there are either progressive or classic grille designs. The classic grille (not confirmed for the UK market) features a three twin-louvre design, with the iconic three-pointed star positioned upright at the end of the power-domed bonnet. The more contemporary look omits the bonnet emblem in favour of a flat badge, and the grille adopts a single bar without the surrounding grille area. This is made up of 212 tiny Mercedes logos, forming the mesh pattern.

As standard, the headlights feature LED technology, and there is also an option to upgrade to the more advanced Digital Light feature. This innovative system dynamically adjusts the light pattern to avoid dazzling other road users. Paying close attention

The 214-series E-Class demonstrates Mercedes-Benz's commitment to elevating luxury standards and introducing class-leading technology

WORDS **DAVE HUMPHREYS**
IMAGES **MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

step

to details, Mercedes, like many other manufacturers, now provides the choice of an illuminated grille surround, adding an extra touch of theatrics to the Coming Home and Leaving Home animations. When driving with the low beams on, the grille surround remains lit, although it is relatively understated compared to similar options available in the market.

As in other models in the range, Mercedes equips the E-Class with door handles that lie flush against the bodywork when locked. They electronically extend when the driver approaches or runs their finger along the handle's outer surface. This design not only enhances the car's side profile but matches the previous generation's 0.23 drag coefficient despite a larger frontal area, promoting overall efficiency.

The overall size of the new E-Class has undergone minimal changes compared to its predecessor. The most noticeable difference is a slight increase in the wheelbase, extended by 22mm, which primarily benefits the rear passengers. The car retains a traditional cab-rearward design, preserving the familiar three-box layout of the segment. However, the shape gently slopes into a rounded back end, adding a touch of modernity to the classic design.

At the back of the car, capping the wrap-around lights, you'll find a horizontal chrome (or black) bar that spans the rear. There are two-star motifs in each cluster, serving as a prominent reminder to other road users that you are driving a Mercedes. Inside the boot, there's a spacious 540-litre capacity, although this volume reduces to 370 litres in the plug-in hybrid models due to the presence of the battery. However, we're glad to see ▷



▷ that the awkward step found in the boot of the old E-Class PHEV is gone.

Getting into the E-Class can be done in several ways aside from using the traditional key fob. If you have a compatible Apple smartphone or Apple Watch, you can use the Digital Vehicle Key, which operates using ultra-wideband technology (UWB). This doesn't rely on a mobile phone signal after the initial setup, ensuring that it functions perfectly even in locations with limited signal, such as underground car parks.

In addition to the convenience of the Digital Vehicle Key, car owners can also share this with up to 16 friends and family members using AirDrop, iMessage, or other message apps. The recipients can easily add the key to their Apple Wallet. Should the need arise, these digital keys can be revoked instantly, eliminating the need for any awkward conversations such as, "Can I have my car key back, please?"

▷ Four-wheel drive cars to be confirmed in UK.

▷▷ The E-Class starts at £55,290 OTR in the UK.

Inside

As you close the driver's door, you'll notice a reassuringly solid sound, sealing you within the lavish cabin. The interior features a great blend of materials, including fine grain wood trim on the centre console, replacing the easily scratched piano black as the standard finish. For those who prefer the piano lacquer black, Mercedes will still offers it as part of the Manufaktur line.

In this iteration, the air vents are subtly integrated into the dashboard's edges, departing from the circular design found in many modern Mercedes. This update grants the interior a cleaner aesthetic, while also allowing for ample ambient lighting. This serves a dual purpose: it acts as a decorative feature and is also linked to the safety systems. When something or someone approaches while opening the door, the lighting provides a visual alert, enhancing safety and awareness.

The E-Class is available with two different dashboard layouts, one of which includes the option of the new 'Superscreen'. This advanced display is an evolution of the Hyperscreen introduced with the EQS. The Superscreen consists of a large central touchscreen and a smaller second touchscreen positioned in front of the passenger. Both screens are enclosed within a single piece of glass, adding a sleek and futuristic touch to the interior.

From certain angles, the Superscreen indeed presents an impressive display, but from other perspectives, it's apparent where the two screens are located beneath the panel. Those who are sensitive to fingerprints may prefer to keep a dust cloth handy too, as the glossy surfaces can collect smudges. However, the MBUX operating system has undergone improvements, making it more intuitive, with functions resembling apps on a phone screen, enhancing user-friendliness.

Among the features, the E-Class now allows the installation of







△ Pictured is the Superscreen dash arrangement. ▽ The new E-Class is 4.9m long, 2m wide and 1.4m tall. ▷ Up to 540 litres of luggage space in the saloon. △▷ E200, E300e and E220d models confirmed for UK.





third-party apps like Webex and Zoom, which can utilise the optional video camera positioned atop the dashboard. While this idea might be intriguing to some, it's worth considering that having a video camera constantly placed there may not be everyone's preference for privacy or aesthetic reasons.

When a passenger occupies the front seat, it activates their menu display, replacing the screensaver image. Through this menu, they gain control over various functions and can stream their own media using Bluetooth headphones or browse the web via the Vivaldi browser. While streaming video content is possible, the display is intentionally obscured from the driver's perspective. If the driver happens to glance at it, a built-in monitoring camera automatically dims the display significantly, so it appears as a black panel to ensure minimal distraction while driving.

Regardless of the chosen dashboard layout, a standalone digital instrument display is standard in front of the driver. There's also an option for a 3D display, but it is not as impressive as the technology's description might suggest.

The improvements to the cabin are not limited to the front passengers; the rear passenger compartment feels notably better than before, especially from the outer seats. As ever, the transmission tunnel limits legroom and foot space for the middle passenger. Nevertheless, the occupants on either side will have ample space and comfort. The head- and shoulder room in the rear are also generous, making the experience especially agreeable for those being chauffeured.

Drive systems

Mercedes offers a diverse selection of engines for the E-Class, all equipped with electrification, either through 48V mild-hybrid tech or as plug-in hybrid powertrains. The E200 (201bhp) and E220d (194bhp) models now get increased electric motor assistance – up from 15kW to 17kW (23bhp) – and it also provides a significant torque boost of as much as 151lb ft.

Indeed, the upgraded mild-hybrid system enhances the refinement of the four-cylinder turbodiesel engine, particularly during stop-start sequences in traffic. The engine shuts off swiftly when coming to a stop and restarts seamlessly. Thanks to a ▷

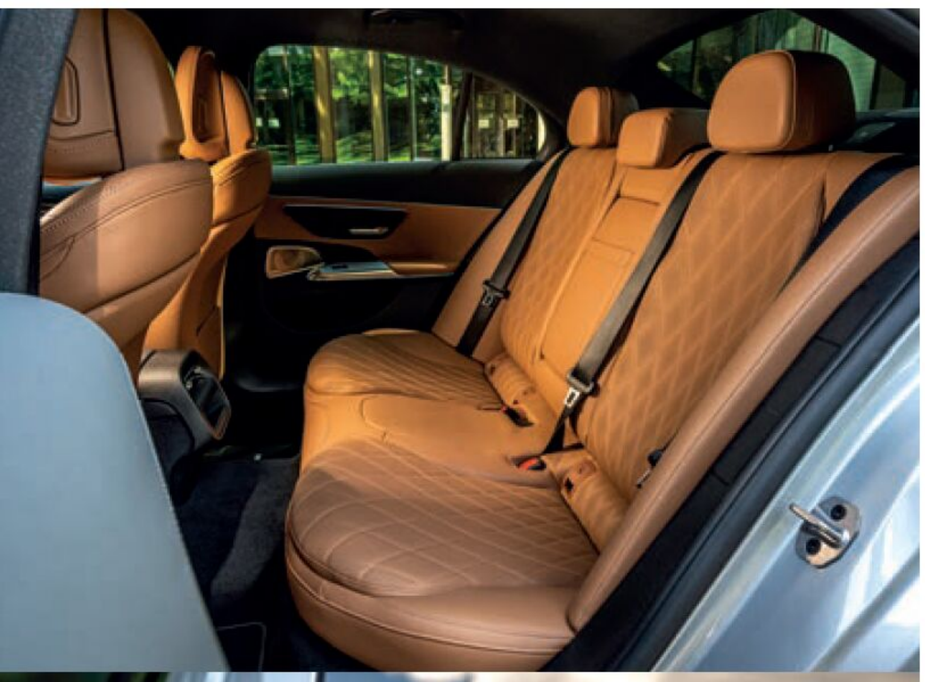
▷ substantial supply of torque, the in-line four-cylinder engine doesn't have to work strenuously while cruising, aided by the longer gears of the nine-speed automatic transmission. This combination contributes to a smooth and comfortable driving experience during both city traffic and motorway journeys.

When acceleration is required, the nine-speed automatic transmission quickly drops down a few ratios. However, as the digital rev counter approaches 3,000rpm, the serenity in the cabin is disrupted by a recognisable diesel noise, reminding you that you are driving a four-cylinder diesel. Despite sound insulation efforts, there's only so much that can be done to conceal the engine's increased workload.

Despite that, the diesel engine does have its advantages and continues to be a popular choice among a wide range of consumers. When driven with less demand, it can achieve excellent fuel economy figures. Mercedes quotes a combined figure of 51.4 to 58.8mpg and, during our time with the car, these numbers seemed easily attainable. Even in the E220d 4Matic model, there is only a marginal increase in fuel consumption due to the extra weight and friction of the all-wheel-drive system.

Despite its substantial size, the new E-Class Saloon exhibits a notable level of agility. When compared to the plug-in hybrids, the diesel feels more nimble and lighter on the road. This difference in handling is due to the plug-in hybrids carrying an extra 350kg of hardware, which has an impact on their overall driving dynamics and manoeuvrability. As a result, the non-plug-

▽ **Leather trim is standard on all Es sold in the UK.**







◁ **Rear LEDs in the style of the M-B three-pointed star.**

▽◁ **Increase in wheelbase helps rear legroom.**



E220d



Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz E220d (W214)

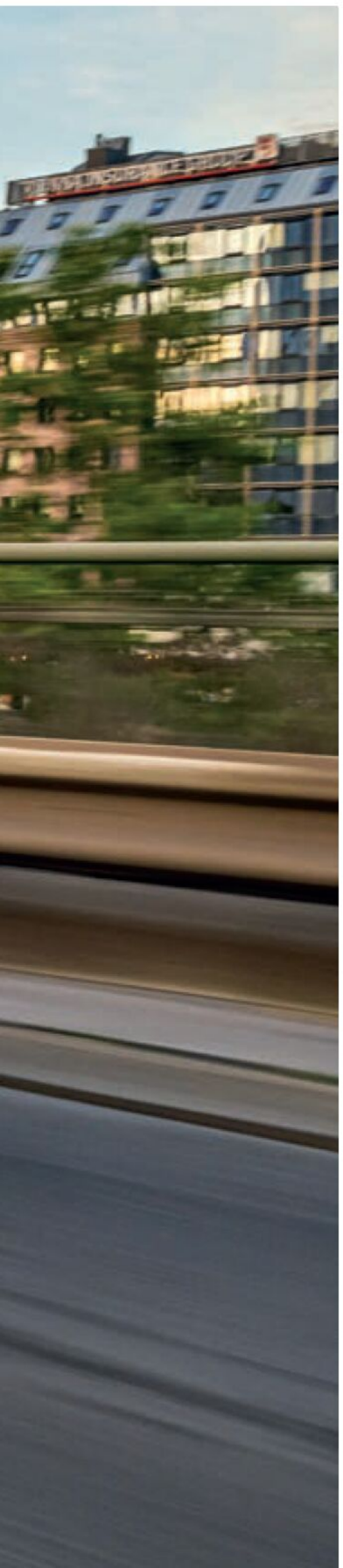
Engine OM654 1,993cc 4-cyl turbocharged + integrated starter generator **Power** 194bhp@3,600rpm
Torque 324lb ft@1,800-2,800rpm **Electric boost** 23bhp/151lb ft
Transmission 9-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,915kg
0-62mph 7.6sec **Top speed** 148mph
Fuel consumption 51.4-58.9mpg **CO2 emissions** 125-143g/km
Years produced 2023-on

Mercedes-Benz E300e 4Matic (W214)

Engine M254 1,999cc 4-cyl turbocharged + electric motor and 25.4kWh battery **Power** 201bhp@6,100rpm
Torque 236lb ft@2,000-4,000rpm **Electric boost** 127bhp/324lb ft
System output 309bhp/406lb ft **Transmission** 9-speed auto, 4WD
Weight 2,265kg **0-62mph** 6.5sec **Top speed** 145mph
Fuel consumption 313.9-470.8mpg **CO2 emissions** 14-20g/km
Years produced 2023-on

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





in hybrid models of the E-Class provide a more responsive and dynamic driving experience.

The weight penalty of the plug-in hybrid models is undoubtedly worth it from an efficiency point of view. Take, for instance, the E300e, which combines a 95kW (127bhp) electric motor with its two-litre, four-cylinder, turbocharged petrol engine to produce impressive combined maximum outputs of 309bhp and 406lb ft of torque. These are commendable figures for a car that, on paper, can officially achieve fuel economy of up to 470mpg.

Electric range

While these figures may seem magical, achieving such exceptional fuel economy does require diligence in charging the 25.4kWh battery regularly. Officially, the E300e can cover up to 71 miles solely on electric power, without ever needing to engage the petrol engine. This electric-only driving range makes the plug-in hybrid option an enticing choice for those who have access to charging facilities and desire a more eco-friendly and efficient driving experience.

When you begin a journey in the plug-in hybrid, it automatically defaults to using its electric motor, even if there's only a small amount of charge left in the battery. As a result, your initial drive is nearly silent, and depending on the battery's charge level, it continues to drive much like a fully electric vehicle (EV). Drivers have the option to stay in pure electric mode (as long as the battery has sufficient charge) or choose the default hybrid mode. This ensures that the car primarily operates in electric mode unless the accelerator pedal is fully pressed. A seamless transition between electric and hybrid driving modes provides drivers with an optimal balance of efficiency and performance, making it an appealing choice for those seeking to balance them both in one car.

The ride comfort of the E-Class leaves little to be desired, and opting for the Airmatic suspension upgrade as part of the Technology package elevates the comfort level even further. The air setup, combined with continuously adjustable dampers, ensures an optimal level of comfort, enhancing the driving experience.

> The ride comfort of the E-Class leaves little to be desired

One standout feature is the rear-wheel steering which, once experienced, becomes highly desirable, especially in tighter spaces. Though it doesn't turn the rear wheels as much as the EQS's (which is a larger car), the 4.5-degree turning capability is sufficient to significantly reduce the E-Class's turning circle by 90cm. This improvement in manoeuvrability makes driving in confined areas much more manageable and enhances the overall driving pleasure.

The E300e offers several other advantages, including the remarkable silence experienced when driving solely on battery power. While it may not reach the same level of tranquillity found in an S-Class, it comes exceptionally close. This exemplifies how Mercedes is dedicated to providing a luxurious experience beyond its top-tier models. Although the E-Class does not entirely replicate the full S-Class experience, with the right specification, the gap between the two is significantly reduced. This is excellent news for potential E-Class buyers who can now enjoy a level of refinement and luxury that is almost on par with the flagship S-Class.

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **STEVE HALL**

HERE'S ONE *they made*

Following on from our review of the brand new E-Class, we experience the well preserved charm of a low-mile W124 E320 from Mercedes specialist Edward Hall in Buckinghamshire

earlier...



The 124-series Saloon is now a much-appreciated modern classic, and not just in its V8, Porsche-built 500E/E500 guise, because even a two-litre, poverty spec car with cloth and steel wheels will attract attention if presentable looking and rust-free.

Precisely when the market decided that Mercedes' mid-range four-door, the W124, produced over a longer than usual Stuttgart cycle, from 1984 until 1996, was no longer simply an old car but one to cherish is hard to determine. It might have been in 2014 when the Honest John website in the UK proclaimed it Classic of the Year, an award Mercedes-Benz Classic was happy to take to a wider audience. Or perhaps it was once it became clear that good examples of this car that was built for hard use – for at least a couple of decades it was the German taxi trade standard issue workhorse – were far fewer in number, triggering a natural price rise.

Previously, the W124's ubiquity – over 2.2m were delivered worldwide – had obscured its collectability, a state of affairs reflected in this very magazine. *Mercedes Enthusiast* first published in late 2001, but while in those early days we frequently covered the 500E/E500, the 124-series Coupe and a few Estates, it was not until August 2006 that a major feature on a W124 appeared. For the record, it focused on a 300E-24.

> "Previously, the W124's ubiquity had obscured its collectability"

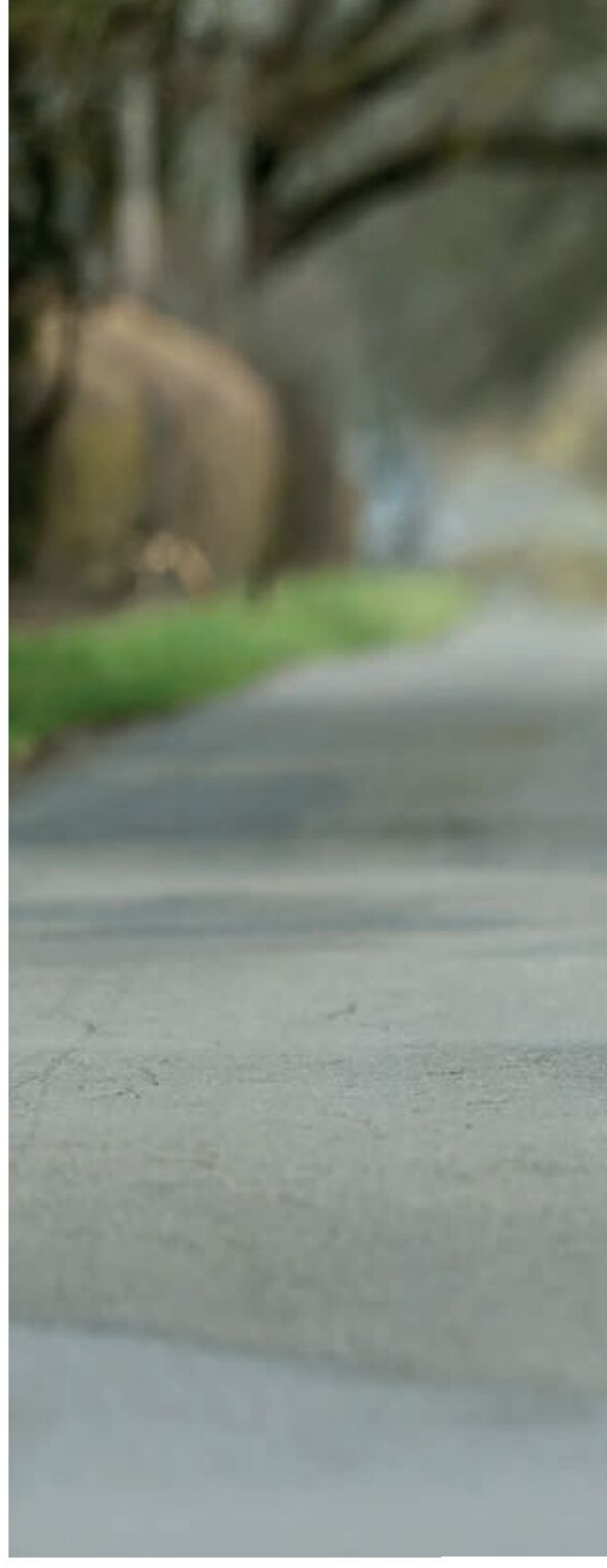
Now, the W124's qualities are clearly what the present generation of classic Benz enthusiasts love: its understated, never dating 1980s Bruno Sacco styling, the 'over-engineering', metalwork and interior durability – and of course the unique Mercedes-Benz aura. But the Saloon is following the familiar you-don't-know-what-you've-got-till-it's-gone path of most other departed Mercedes four-doors.

The scarcity of W124s good enough for retail has prompted Edward Hall of Edward Hall Classic Mercedes, based in Buckinghamshire, to look to Japan, and he works with a partner to locate and import suitable cars. This country was traditionally a good market for Mercedes-Benz, taking many premium models – as well as being a common destination for 'pre-merger' AMG conversions, but that's a story for another day. A further bonus for UK customers is that Japan is a right-hand drive country, although those who originally bought top Benzes often specified LHD as that was seen to confer added kudos. ▷





> Both front seats have electrical adjustment, there's air conditioning, an electric sunroof and the eight-hole alloy wheels are diamond cut



◁ Rear seating has retained its plush feeling.

△◁ This badging came into force back in July 1993.

▽ Japanese text remains on the shift gate area.

▽ Executive transport that is also practical.

▷ A prime example of what can be found in Japan is the 1995 E320 seen here, the Brilliant Silver over black leather car having covered just 53,800 miles – Japanese Benzes don't typically accrue big mileages – and wearing a £15,995 price tag at the time of our visit. It is in exceptional condition inside and out, and has been fully maintained, including having the infamous, biodegrading engine wiring loom replaced.

"Japan is now the best source of 124s," says Edward. "You can pick up some nice ones in the UK, but most of the cars are rusted." That prompts an important question: how many more treasures like this does the Asian island country harbour? "Fewer and fewer", is all Edward can tell us.

W124 production ended in summer 1995 apart from some CKD kits for export into 1996, leaving this car one of the final ones out of Sindelfingen, and a culmination of the 11 years of regular updating, with many different engines and two facelifts, the first in 1989 and the second over 1992 and 1993, during which all powertrains were replaced and the front bodywork significantly changed for the remaining years in production.

Prior to 1992, petrol W124s sold were mostly two- and 2.3-litre four-cylinder, badged 200E and 230E, and the 2.6-litre six-cylinder 260E and three-litre 300E. Once the final model range was set out, the eight-valve fours became two- and 2.2-litre 16-valve, and the 300E graduated to 3.2 litres and 320 numbering. There was also the 3.6-litre E36 AMG, whose existence Mercedes-Benz does not officially acknowledge, but we know a few of these saloons were built – *Mercedes Enthusiast* drove and featured one in 2005. The E500 continued to the end of production.





When the 124-series was launched, the then new M103 straight-six, two-valve engine was considered a major advancement over preceding sixes, whose refinement wasn't their best aspect. The M103 revved beautifully and contributed to the all-round excellence of the 300E flagship model. But that was an era of increasing power outputs, not least from compatriot carmakers Audi and BMW, and within a few years the M103's output looked somewhat limp.

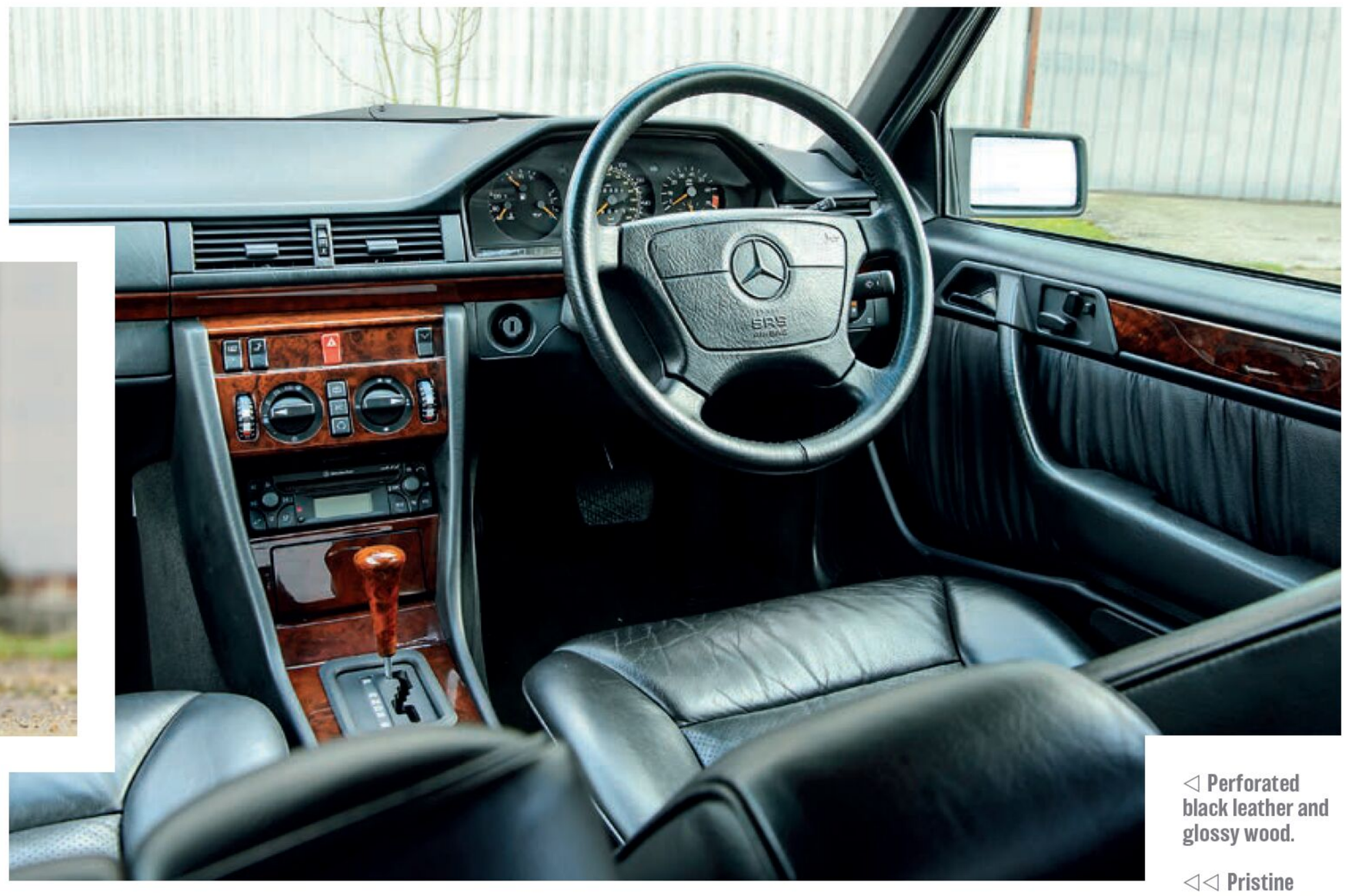
Mercedes' reaction was, for the 1989 facelift, to engineer a twin-camshaft, multivalve cylinder-head for the M103 and rename it the M104. The bragging rights of '300E-24' on the bootlid were clear to see, especially as the revised motor had made its debut in the recently launched R129 SL, but it did nothing to solve the M103's inherent lack of mid-range torque. With 217bhp on tap, it offered over 20 more brake horsepower than the M103, but this came at an even more frantic, 5,700rpm peak, and maximum torque of 195lb ft was barely raised and occurred at an unhelpfully high 4,600rpm.

It is not regarded as one of Mercedes' more successful engines, but it did have the potential for further development and the M104 was reinvented as a 3.2-litre for the 320E (and also in 2.8-litre form for the 280E). Power was unchanged, but torque rose a useful 17 per cent to 229lb ft, at a more relevant 3,750rpm. The five-speed, electronically regulated automatic gearbox offered with the three-litre M104 was carried over, always a cost option on 124s.

The other late-in-life 124 development was the new, slimline front grille, and the switching of the Mercedes star from it to the leading edge of the bonnet. That was intended to be a

refreshing detail, but from a classic perspective the pre-facelift 'big grille' look has of late been seen as more desirable. At the same time, Mercedes introduced a new badging system with the model family a prefix instead of a suffix, hence the 320E became the E320.

Edward claims that his is "a fantastic example with all the right options", and we're inclined to agree. It has leather upholstery, which he points out is rare on a Japanese Mercedes import, most having cloth. Both front seats have electrical adjustment, there's air conditioning, an electric sunroof and the eight-hole alloy wheels are diamond cut and in beautiful condition. What you don't see is much evidence of where the car came from, other than the square instead of rectangular rear numberplate, and some Japanese script at the base of the gear selector. The original speedometer was in kilometres but Edward changed it to an mph item, and the gearbox ▷





◁ Perforated black leather and glossy wood.

◁◁ Pristine eight-hole alloys in size 15-inch.

▽ Lower body cladding finished in a darker shade.



▷ The best engine for a regular W124?



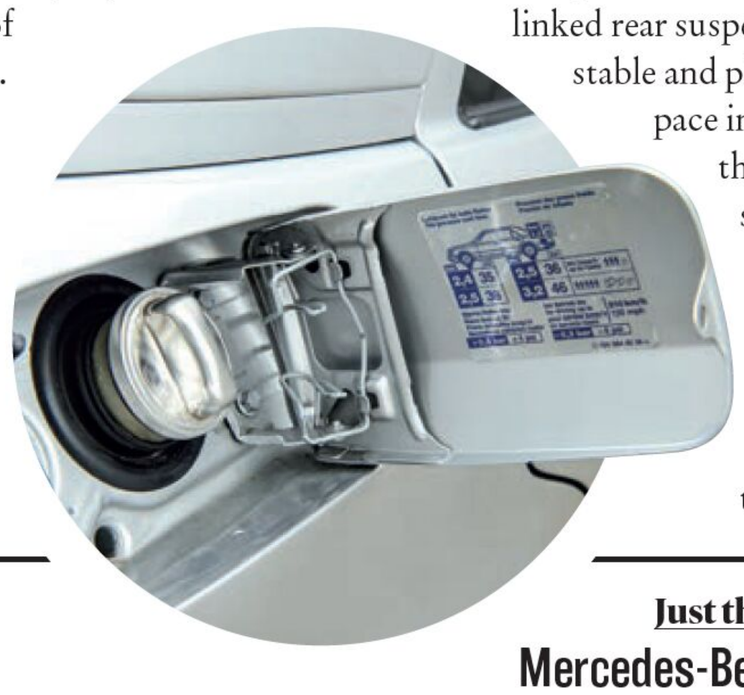
> The E320 could satisfactorily be pressed into everyday duties

▷ mode switch is absent, which is no great loss seeing as it doesn't seem to do much anyway.

Hence the owner of this car won't be giving much thought to where this freshly imported E320 has been for the last 28 years, and is more likely marvelling at how well it showcases the W124. We've driven enough 124s to know that many are well worn and no particular pleasure to be inside, but this one really is top notch. The feeling of it being close to perfect starts as soon as you make contact with the lovely black leather of the seats, which retain their uniquely Mercedes combination of firmness and springiness. You reach for the door-mounted electric adjuster to slide the seat for the ideal driving position; no memory button, but we can forgive that, and also that the box for the optional steering column adjuster wasn't ticked.

A 124 trait is an accelerator pedal with a small amount of dead travel, but once on the move the M104 is almost intoxicatingly sweet. And the extra cylinder capacity over the three-litre might not have been a lot but it transforms driveability, adding a pleasing mid-range response. This car does not have the five-speed autobox that further enhances both the general driving feel and also cruising thanks to an extra ratio, but the five-speeder is regarded as less robust than the simpler four-speed unit, so for some owners the standard 'box is a plus.

On its sophisticated-for-the-time, multi-linked rear suspension, the E320 remains stable and planted even when the pace increases, and never mind the recirculating ball steering that favours shock absorption over feedback from the road. Compliant but not over-soft springs and conservative 65-series tyres provide a ride that is compliant but not mushy. Overall, the E320 is a car that although will probably now serve as a weekend classic treat, could satisfactorily be pressed into everyday duties, such is the modernity it keeps hold of.



▷ Not often you find this area so spotlessly clean.

Furthermore, the E320 makes the case for being the preferred W124 model this side of a 500E/E500 budget, and by some margin. The last-of-the-line M104 engine, although with one or two well-known maintenance issues, is head and shoulders above the older six, the four-cylinder models offer only a mediocre driving experience, and although the diesels stretch economy their calendar rather than stopwatch acceleration times can be frustrating. Also, all E320s had plenty of equipment even before extras, and in the closing years of the 124-series dealer stock of this model tended to be generously optioned.

It means the E320 is the most sought-after and thus most expensive to buy. But when £15,000 – far from a king's ransom in the car world – buys the example we've looked at here, it's still a great value modern classic.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz E320 (W124)

Engine M104 3,199cc 6-cyl **Power** 217bhp@5,500rpm **Torque** 229lb ft@3,750rpm **Transmission** 4-speed auto, RWD

Weight 1,500kg **0-62mph** 7.9sec **Top speed** 143mph **Fuel consumption** 19.2mpg **Years produced** 1993-1995

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 1995 car as pictured; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

Thank you to Edward Hall Classic Mercedes for the loan of the E320 Web www.edward-hall.co.uk Tel 01844 339666

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



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



Finished in gleaming unmarked classic white, with black hide interior, rear seats, hard and soft tops, automatic, power steering, power windows, ABS brakes, alloys, stereo system, 69,000 miles, service history, complete with all tools, new Mot supplied on purchase, only three previous owners, always garaged, drives superb, excellent example.



Mercedes Sports 1985 280SL **£27,750**



RHD, finished in signal red with cream hide interior, headrests, rear seats, cruise control, ABS, light up vanity mirrors, tinted glass, hard & soft tops, automatic, power steering, spare wheel unused, complete with all tools, stereo system, power windows, virtually a one owner, last owner for 33 years, this car is just remarkable condition, 86,000 miles from new, full history, garaged, papered from new, drives like new, very difficult to find a better one of this last model.



Mercedes 300SL Sports 1989 **£45,750**



Finished in gleaming Astral Silver with superb blue contrasting interior, also matching navy blue carpets, automatic and power steering, excellent chrome, tinted glass, power windows, period radio with blue tooth, walnut veneer dash, with a power sunroof, original factory alloys, complete with all original tools, only covered 46,000 miles from new, complete with all service history and various invoices. Very difficult to find a car in this condition, a rare find, always garaged and pampered from new, hence this condition. A very fast appreciating asset.



Mercedes 450 SLC, 1978 **£45,500**

CLASSICS ALWAYS WANTED

FREE DELIVERY ON ALL CARS IN THE UK

RETURN TO GLORY

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND**
IMAGES **JASON DODD**



“Its restorations, recognised as of the highest calibre, were rewarded at prestige concours events”

Investors have turned around the fortunes of JD Classics in Gloucestershire and, with help from its expert staff, this classic restorer and race car preparation company is ready to write a new chapter in its long history







▷ Mo Nico-Consari is now the CEO at JD Classics.

▷▷ A classic Porsche 911 gets ready for painting.

▽ S-Class modern classic receiving the JD treatment.

Founded in 1987 by Derek Hood, Essex-based JD Classics went on to become a highly respected name in the top-end classic car business, not just in the UK but globally. Its restorations, recognised as of the highest calibre, were regulars at prestige concours events from Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire to Amelia Island in Florida, while the period racing cars it built entered and won silverware in races such as the RAC Tourist Trophy at the Goodwood Revival meeting, and at Le Mans Classic.

Its sponsorship of classic racing has also been significant, including the Mille Miglia, Le Mans Classic, Concours d'Elegance, Salon Privé, Goodwood Revival and Goodwood Members' Meeting. With meticulous attention to detail and an unwavering commitment to craftsmanship, JD Classics left an indelible mark on the automotive world, and its claim of being a leading car restoration company was a realistic one. Based in Maldon, JD Classics' rise to prominence was a result



of its steadfast dedication to classic car restoration of the highest calibre. Each restoration project undertaken by the company was a laborious journey to revive the spirit and essence of these timeless vehicles.

But shockingly, in September 2018, the firm – by then 60 per cent owned by hedge fund company, Charme Capital (Hood had retained 40 per cent) – crashed to earth when it went into administration, following revelations that it was being investigated for financial irregularities. At this stage the case had not been concluded, the outcome not known for some time after. An undignified ending after over 30 years for one of the major players in the UK restoration business looked all too possible.

Fortunately, hard-headed US corporate money men from JP Morgan Bank thought otherwise, considering the 65,000sq ft facility in Chelmsford, the still loyal customer base, the impressive motorsport portfolio and not least the accumulated expertise of the 60 employees to be an asset that should not be coldly dispersed to the four winds by a dispassionate liquidator. As a result, in the same month JD Classics was purchased by a JP Morgan subsidiary, New York-based HPS Investment Partners, which set up a new company, Woodham Mortimer, to run it. Former Lotus boss Jean-Marc Gales was installed as CEO with a brief to restructure the business.

Gales pledged to retain all the workforce at the new facility in Chelmsford, an hour's drive from central London, and aimed to increase both the restoration and racing side of the business. He also cut back the recently launched US venture in the interests of consolidating UK and European operations, although he did stress that America was as important a customer base as ever and that a US strategy would be formulated in due course. Events in the corporate finance world can move quickly, and in April 2022 with Gales – described by one JD Classics employee as a "serial turner-arounder" – having set the recovery template and eyeing up his next project, Woodham Mortimer/JD Classics was purchased by ZCC Investments, whose Mo Nico-Consari became the new CEO.





◁ Dashboard removed to reveal places to restore.

△ Rubbing shoulders with British makes.

▽ Classic roadster taken back to metal.



Reborn

Publicity for JD Classic's new phase was unleashed at an event the firm had long been closely associated with – the annual Mille Miglia, the modern, safer iteration of the infamous 1,000km Italian road race banned on safety grounds in 1957. At this point, it was decided to reinstate the 'JD Classics' name, albeit with the wording "A Woodham Mortimer company" attached to it, which had disappeared with the 2018 collapse. The new owners believed that JD Classics remained a valuable trading name despite the troubles of the recent past, and retrieved it from the liquidator. ▷

> "Each restoration project undertaken by the company was a laborious journey to revive the spirit and essence of these timeless vehicles"





◁ Sales, racing preparation, restoration and storage services are offered at JD.

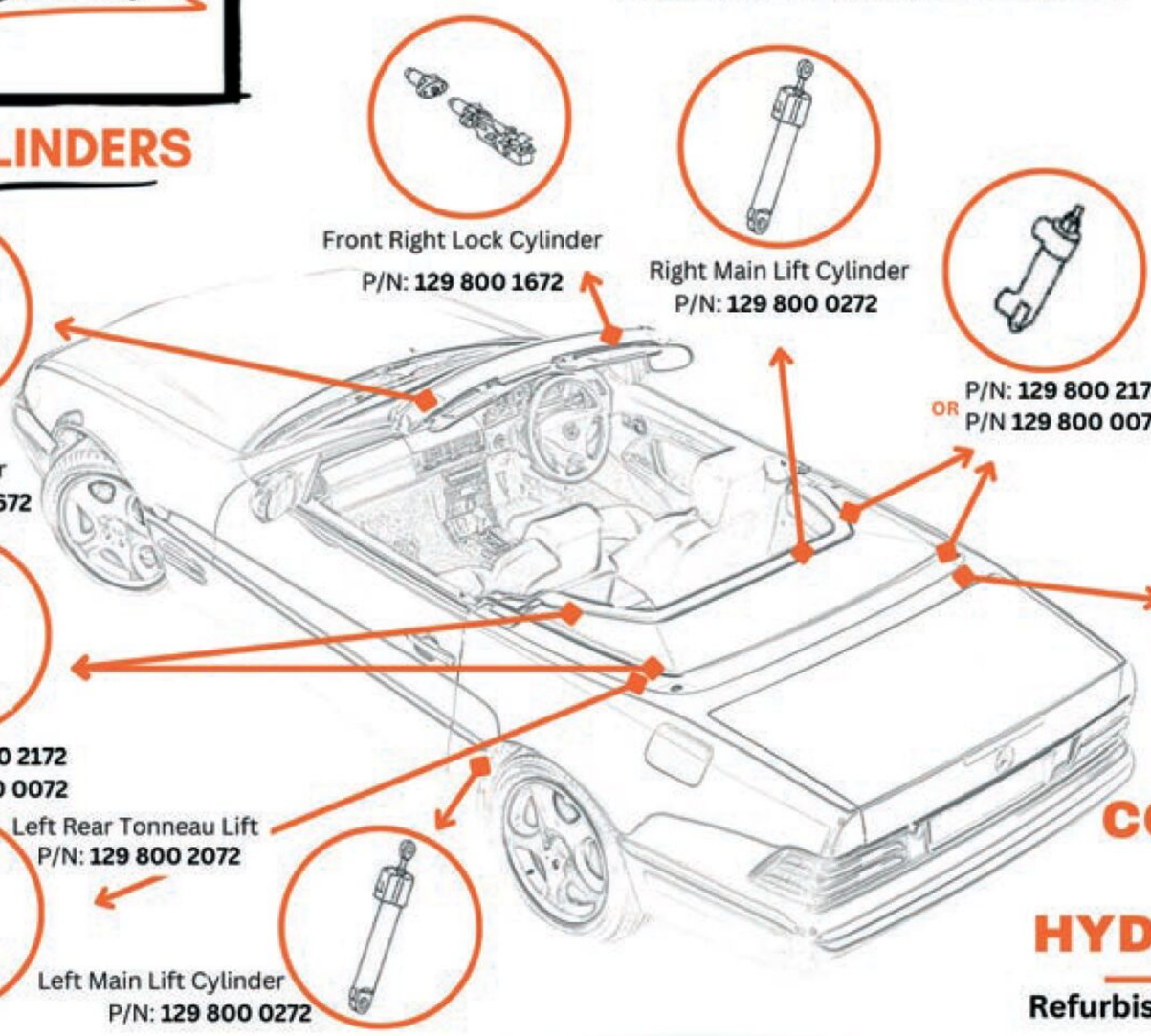
◁◁ The trimshop has helped JD win top awards.

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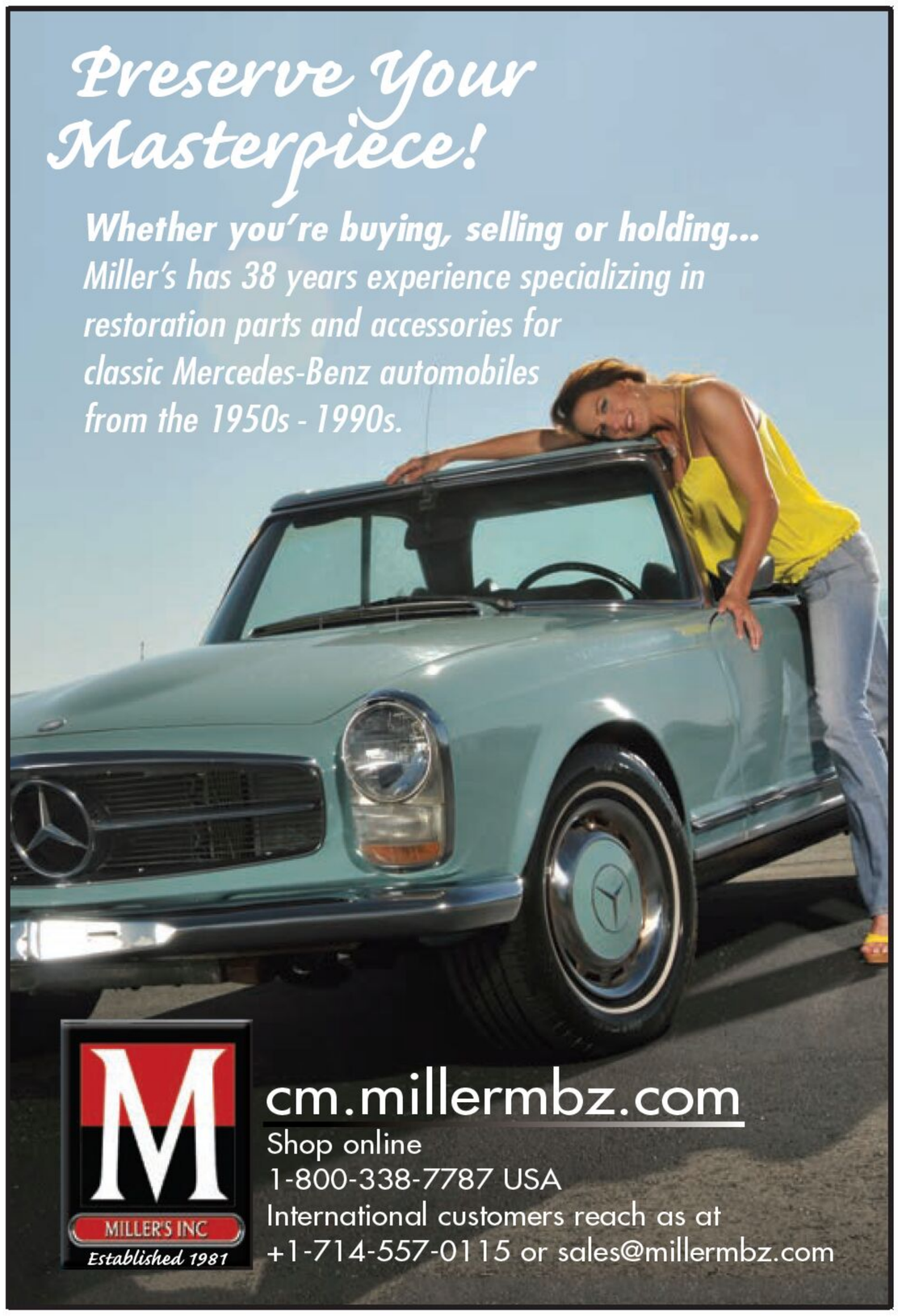
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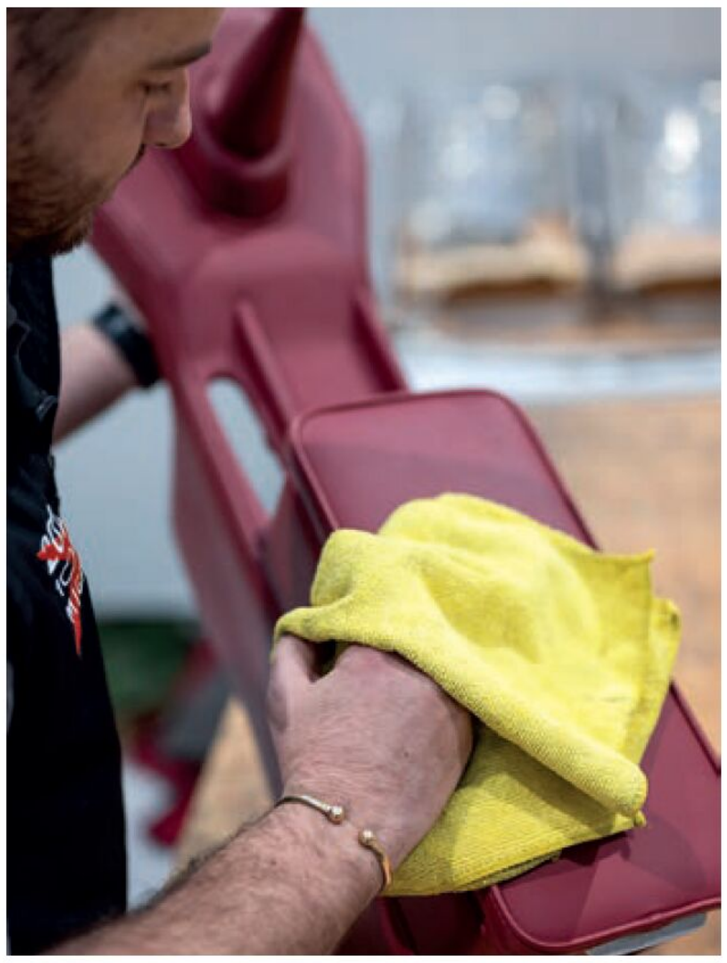












△ JD has a small army of expert classic restorers.

"When we bought Woodham Mortimer earlier this year, we found trophy cabinets full of awards given to the restoration and Competition Departments of JD Classics over many years," Nico-Consari revealed at the time. "Classic car enthusiasts the world over are aware of the history of JD Classics and its rich pedigree over many decades," he continued. "We are totally committed to building on this heritage and that is why we have strengthened and diversified our Board to ensure we have the kind of leadership and strategic vision that will be instrumental in building on these great foundations and successes.

"We felt there was no better time than at the iconic Mille Miglia 2022 to relaunch a brand which has for decades represented British excellence across the globe. Our ambition for JD Classics is nothing less than becoming the pre-eminent company for service delivery and customer care in the global classic car industry."

We take this to mean that Nico-Consari wants to make JD Classics a 'one-stop-shop' for the wealthy classic car owner, Mercedes-Benz or otherwise. The company will have more clearly defined areas of expertise: classic restorations servicing, engineering, sales – and not least motorsport, hence the Mille Miglia launch.

Big ambitions

The motorsport department is worth a closer look, as it goes way beyond simply race-prepping cars. Without modern conveniences like power steering, traction control and stability control, classic motorsport is one of the more challenging forms of racing, hence JD Classics offers personalised driver training, sometimes by a prominent guest racing driver, at a range of circuits in the UK and Europe. The car race prep, which the firm has offered for 30 years, extends to race support all the way to the grid and beyond.

Pre-purchase vehicle inspection anywhere in the world is also provided, customers advised on the precise condition, and possible future issues, of a potential acquisition. All major areas of the vehicle are assessed, from the bodywork, interior, steering, transmission and front and rear suspension to the ignition and electrics. The specialist team can not only judge the condition of a vehicle, but also its originality. With nearly 40 years of experience in restoring, sourcing and racing some of the world's most valuable vehicles, JD Classics can identify non-original upgrades and repairs that might affect a car's value. The car storage service (at £50 per week plus VAT) is equally comprehensive at the 24/7 secured and alarmed premises. On arrival the car is fully assessed, after which ▷

> "The motorsport department is worth a closer look, as it goes way beyond simply race-prepping cars"

▽◁ Interior trim work is all done in-house at JD.

▽ Rust repair work is a real hands-on affair.

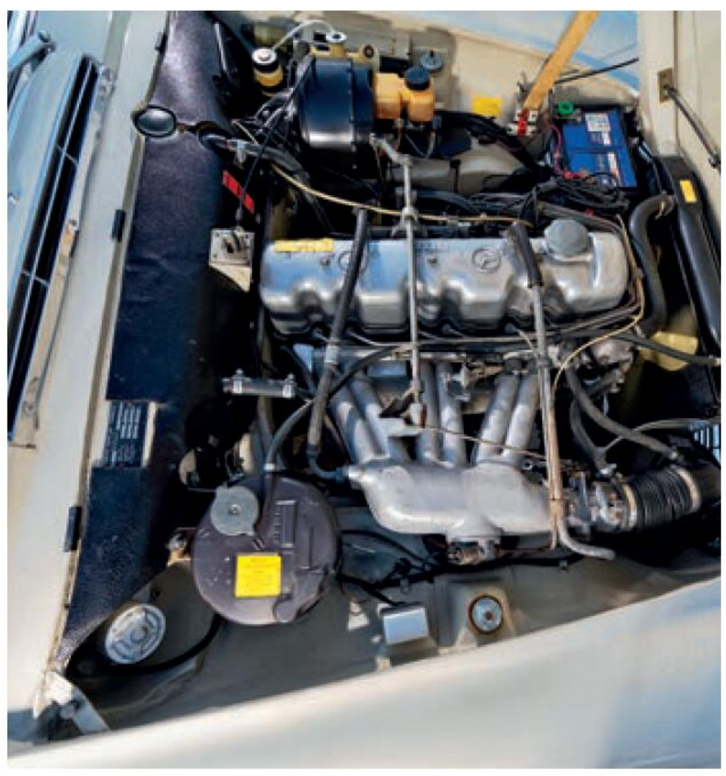












△ This SL came to Europe in 1996, and the UK in 2013.

△▷ Shiny heater controls, clock and Blaupunkt unit.

▷△△ Manual car finished in lovely Papyrus White.

▷ Impressive manifold of M127 six-cylinder unit.

▽ Brand new red leather fitted to a high standard.

▽▷ This restored 230SL was offered for £125,000.





▷ the battery and fluids are checked and the wheels rotated to avoid flat-spotting.

Much top rate car restoration is carried out in unassuming cottage industry premises but JD Classics is the antithesis of this. The facility with its extensive showroom is modern, spacious and brightly lit, has clean floors and looks well organised; it could almost be home to a thriving specialist car manufacturer.

Mercedes restoration

Although having nurtured a strong Jaguar specialism, both road and racing cars, JD Classics also has considerable expertise in Mercedes-Benz, the recent roll call including the 300SL Gullwing, its 190SL junior stablemate, the W108/W109 saloon and the W113 SL Pagoda. The restoration process for a classic Mercedes at JD Classics is not merely a rebuild, but typically involves a comprehensive approach. This includes thorough research into the vehicle's history and specifications, followed by disassembly, refurbishment, and replacement of parts as needed. Each component, from the engine and transmission to the interior and bodywork, receives expert care and attention.

The left-hand drive Pagoda seen in our photos is a fully restored example of the SL that has in the past attracted its fair share of famous owners, including John Lennon and Charlton Heston in period, and in more times celebrities such as actor John Travolta and 1990s model and now charity campaigner Kate Moss. It's a late version of the original 230SL, first registered in Europe in 1996, and imported to the UK in 2013, being registered a year later.

This manual transmission car, in Papyrus White paint and sharply contrasting red leather has the rare, optional side-facing rear seat. It's a 'matching numbers' car, in other words the engine and gearbox numbers are those held by Mercedes-Benz, confirming them to be the original items. Prior to JD Classics' restoration work it showed two previous UK owners. Besides the body and mechanical re-fettling, it was fitted with central locking (never available on any W113 SL), and a latest technology alarm system. It was offered for £125,000 and has since been sold. It's a stunning looking car, but no less than you'd expect from a restorer that has chased excellence in its work for almost four decades.

▶ *Thank you to JD Classics for its assistance with this feature*
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> "This manual transmission car has the rare, optional side-facing rear seat"

SLSHOP

SLSHOP CELEBRATES 60 YEARS OF PAGODA





As Noel Coward once eruditely put it; “Bed is the perfect climate.” Having no doubt glanced at the cataclysmic weather forecast for 14 July, many of the masses of Pagoda owners who’d expressed prior interest in joining our 60th celebrations, wisely chose to heed his sentiment, staying snug under their duvets.

Due to the British summertime proving to be stereotypically rubbish, once again, we weren’t convinced that any owners would be intrepid enough to drag themselves – never mind their 50+ year-old classic SLs – out into the moist Friday morning maelstrom. To put things in perspective, just 24-hours later, Goodwood Festival of Speed would take a day’s break in order to avoid the worst of the weather.

The fact our Pagoda celebrations proved a success, against all odds, was clearly down in no small part to the car we were celebrating. Very few other sporting machines marking a 60th milestone could have covered a 100-mile trip on such a day and still see its passengers emerge with smiling faces. The rest of the credit for pulling victory from the jaws of defeat must surely go to those brave owners, who decided to forsake their warm beds and help us further immortalise the truly pivotal Pagoda.



Rhapsody in blue

15 years after its launch, Ian Kuah recalls arguably the most extreme Black Series of all, and takes a close look at a striking one-off example owned by renowned marque specialist Mechatronik

WORDS **IAN KUAH**
IMAGES **MECHATRONIK/ALEX PENFOLD**





“The engineers went for the time-honoured formula of power increase coupled to weight loss”

Unique SL65 AMG Black Series



Back in 2008, Mercedes-AMG decided to turn up the volume to 11, creating the pumped up and in-your-face SL65 AMG Black Series. Loaded with more protein than a steak house, you can almost imagine this muscle-bound machine beating its chest like King Kong. However, even tough guys need to go on a diet sometimes, and to get the best possible performance out of the Black Series, the engineers went for the time-honoured formula of power increase coupled to weight loss.

As the new CFRP (carbon fibre-reinforced plastic) body panels – the bonnet, front wings, front bumper/spoiler and bootlid – are evenly distributed across the car and the fixed CFRP roof with integrated rollbar is more or less in the centre, there is no change to the front/rear weight distribution. This remains 52.3/47.7 per cent, but 250kg has been saved, reducing kerb weight to 1,870kg.

The 140mm wider bodywork and big spoilers required for the better road holding and stability play havoc with the drag coefficient, which goes up from around 0.30 to 0.39. Frontal area is also greater at 2.14sq m. The rear wing deploys to a height of 120mm at 75mph and retracts again when speed drops to 37mph. This reduces lift by 32.9kg at 124mph, and comes close to balancing out the front spoiler's 45.3kg of lift reduction at this speed.

Although the SL55, SL63 and SL65 AMG models are true high performance machines against the stopwatch, they are still more GTs than sports car with comfort high on their list of priorities. AMG Black Series cars are a different kettle of fish, however, with an even more focused driving experience dialled into their DNA. To achieve this, radical changes were made to the SL65's chassis.

School of thought

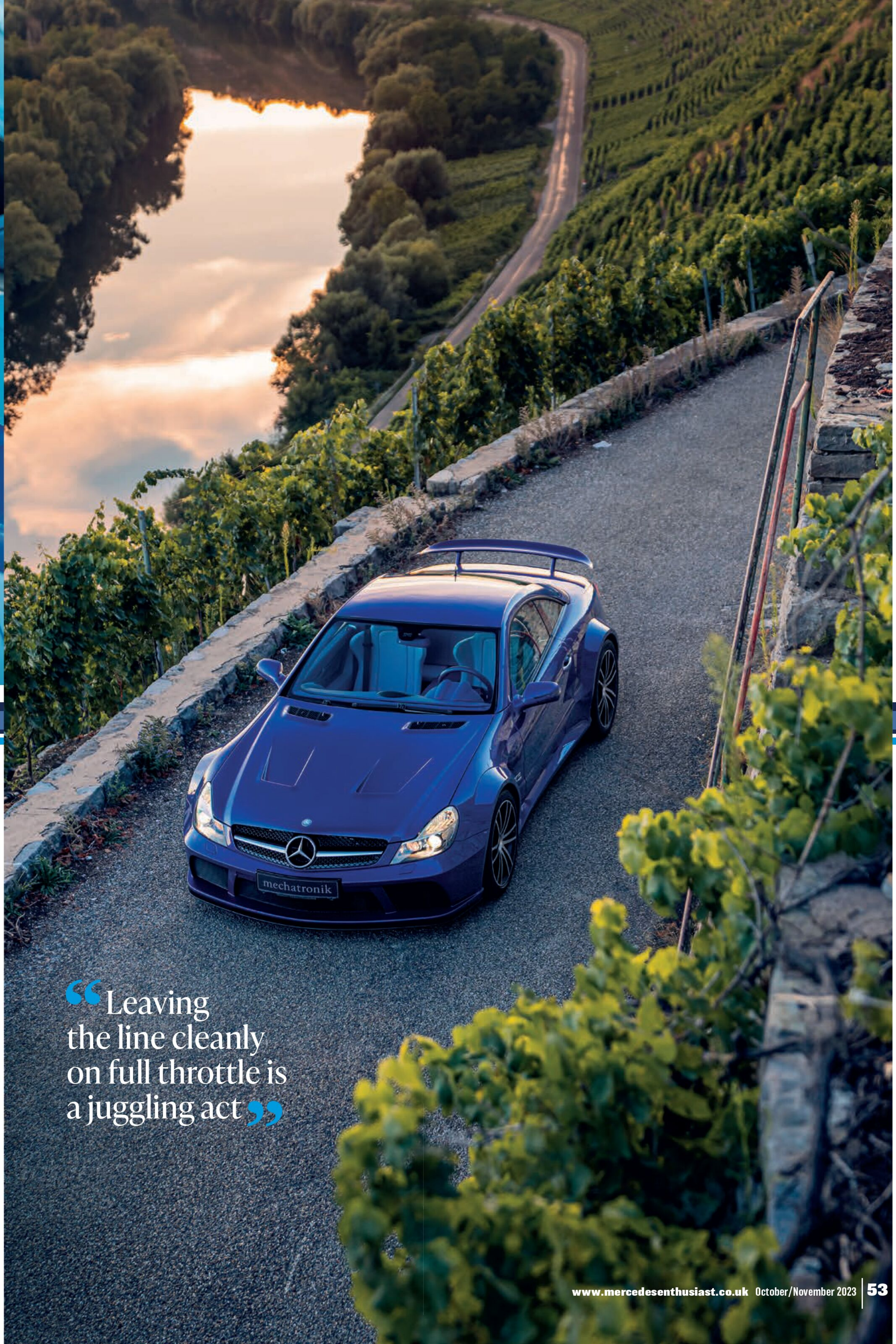
The SL65 Black's front and rear suspension struts are attached to the bodyshell with uniball joints. Due to the trackday bias, the ABC suspension was replaced with a competition style coil-over system, adjustable for ride height, bounce and rebound, and made to AMG's specification by KW. All suspension components are made from alloy apart from the spring-loaded control rods on the front axle, rear axle tie-bars and the rear subframe axle carrier. An additional benefit of ditching the complex electronically controlled damping is a saving of 6kg up front and 3kg at the rear, with cumulative reductions across chassis components adding up to a not insignificant 30kg.

The enlarged wheelarches allow the adoption of a 115mm wider front track, with the rear track 103mm wider. This was achieved through a combination of longer suspension arms ▷

△ Only Merc's five-speed auto could handle the V12 twin-turbo.

▷ Fixed rear spoiler for this hard core SL.





“Leaving the line cleanly on full throttle is a juggling act”

▷ that bestow improved geometrical accuracy under load, and bespoke, one-piece forged wheels in 9.5Jx19 ET36 and 11.5Jx20 ET57 sizes. These are shod with 265/35R19 and 325/30R20 Dunlop Sport Maxx GT tyres specially developed for this car. The brakes are fully up to the performance thanks to 390mm discs with huge six-pot calipers up front, and 360mm discs with four-pot calipers at the rear.

As the SL65 Black Series was to be a homologated low volume road car also sold in the US market, it had to comply with all current legislation and run on normal pump fuel. AMG achieved an output of 661bhp at 5,400rpm, with 737lb ft of torque on tap from 2,200 to 4,200rpm. To enable these heady numbers, BorgWarner Turbo Systems provided a pair of larger turbochargers with 12 per cent more flow capability, and these are mounted on modified exhaust manifolds that enhance gas flow. While the larger intercoolers are around 30 per cent more efficient, boost pressure is unchanged from the normal SL65 AMG and there is no overboost facility.

As Black Series models are targeted at more hard core enthusiasts, the extra intercooler capacity is used to ensure stable output under extreme ambient conditions or when driven hard on a race track. Adopting a race car-style engine bay air management system, the engine bay features a massive electric fan behind a larger radiator inclined forwards at the top so that the air flowing out of it is directed towards the top vents in the bonnet.

Bereft of the vario-roof mechanism, the boot is a larger, more regularly shaped space with a detachable net to prevent smaller objects from sliding around. However, the price you pay for the retractable rear spoiler is two large projections under the bootlid that house its struts and operating mechanism.

Full throttle

Leaving the line cleanly on full throttle is a juggling act. Get it right on a bone-dry surface and you will match the 3.8 seconds that AMG claims for the 0-62mph sprint, and 11 seconds to 124mph. With the massive torque peaking at just 2,200rpm, the Black Series accelerates like a Jumbo Jet taking off. As maximum power is developed at just 5,400rpm, this is not a high-revving motor. The SL65 is unerringly stable past 155mph, when everything goes quiet and you feel like you are in a low flying jet. This Black Series is electronically limited to 320km/h or 198.8mph. Unfettered, it would likely reach at least 205mph, but politics at the time dictated that this car could not be faster than the SLR McLaren.

So long as you do not turn in too aggressively, the front end has a surprising amount of grip. Feedback from the eight per cent quicker steering rack is very direct but the chassis balance is superb with no nervous traits even with so much power on tap. With ESP Sport mode engaged, the system gives you some leeway and keeps the electronic nanny from intruding too early. But wheelspin in any gear is a reality if you switch off the ESP. And off means off! The SL65 Black is not the most tactile or best sounding AMG I have driven, but its appeal runs deeper than that, and I simply love the way it looks.

Collector's car

No SL65 AMG Black Series looks better than this one-off Linarite Blue metallic example, whose first owner took delivery in Germany in 2009 then shipped it to Asia to take pride of place in his private collection. Apart from Japan, Far Eastern countries that drive on the left as in the UK do not permit the registration of LHD vehicles, so the 1,000 or so kilometres the car had on the clock when Mechatronik acquired it in 2020 were most likely covered in Europe following its factory collection.

> "The Linarite Blue metallic paint really pops in all kinds of light"

The odometer now shows an additional 200km, this being the verification test mileage added by Mechatronik's technicians after the recommissioning work required following a decade of inactivity.

Mechatronik says the car is now part of its collection and is not for sale. We can certainly understand why, as this one-of-a-kind SL65 Black has a head-turning ability over and above that of the predominant black, silver and red cars I saw on the launch event, and the white example I saw at RennTech in Florida a couple of years later.

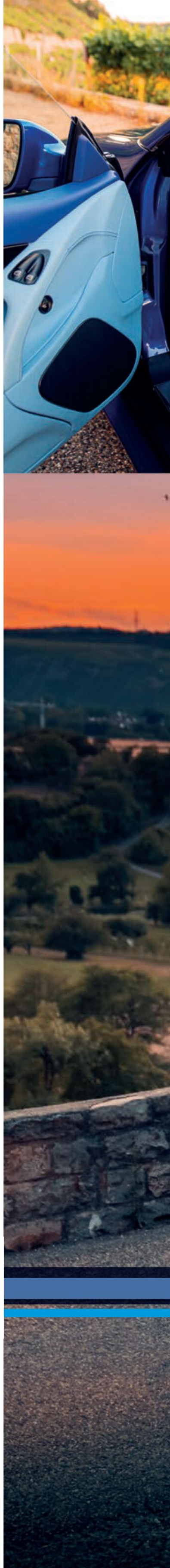
The Linarite Blue metallic paint really pops in all kinds of light, visually etching the unique lines of this car and the compound curves of its big arches in a way that the more common hues simply cannot. And as you can see from Alex Penfold's stunning photographs, its power to engage and wow an onlooker only increases around sunset as the light softens and becomes charged with an ethereal orange glow.

Colour of choice

While there was a standard and very full specification for this car, the choice of body and interior colours was open to customer request. With just 350 cars made, you could choose from standard Mercedes colours or have paint-to-sample under designo. The latter also offered a wide range of leather and Alcantara hues for the cabin trim.

The owner clearly made full use of this made-to-measure service and the dashtop, door tops, steering wheel and carpet are all colour-coded to the Linarite Blue paintwork, as is the Alcantara headlining. The seats and every other leather surface in the interior are swathed in contrasting light blue hide, with the nice finishing touch of contrast stitching featuring Linarite Blue on the light blue leather of the seats, and light blue on the Linarite Blue dashboard and centre console. This contrast theme continues on the Linarite Blue carpet mats with their light blue leather piping, but we would want to protect the vulnerable looking light blue leather heel pad when driving the car.

With exclusive cars, it is actually easier when you build a one-off and apply a plaque that says, "Built for xxxx by AMG". But when you make a limited edition there will always be customers asking for specific numbers like 7, 8 or 88, which are viewed as lucky in Asia. To stave off unhappy clients who did not get their favourite number, AMG sidestepped the issue by labelling every SL65 AMG Black Series as 1 of 350. For the record, 170 cars were earmarked for the US market, with all 350 cars built at Mercedes-Benz's Bremen factory alongside other 230-series SL models.



▷ Two-tone leather makes this car unique.

▷▷ Mechatronik has owned this car since 2020.





Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black Series (R230)

Engine M275 5,980cc V12 biturbo **Power** 661bhp@5,400rpm **Torque** 737lb ft@2,200-4,200rpm **Transmission** 5-speed auto, RWD
Weight 1,870kg **0-62mph** 3.8sec **Top speed** 199mph **Fuel consumption** 19.6mpg **CO2 emissions** 344g/km **Years produced** 2008-2011

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

A

pollo, Bandag, Boto, Kenya, Next Tread, Pinso Rovelo, Saetta, Triangle. Nobody knows precisely how many tyre brands exist, but industry experts estimate there are over 700, leading to a bewildering choice for retailers and motorists alike. Tyres are one of the most neglected parts of car maintenance, although as a *Mercedes Enthusiast* reader, let alone a Mercedes owner, there's a fair chance that you regard tyres as more than just big black round things like many motorists do.

The International Tyre Manufacturers' Association quotes some 41 million car and commercial tyres were replaced last year (excluding the five million part-worn alternatives), and the figure would have been considerably higher if it weren't for the fact that, according to the ITMA, up to 40 per cent of all discarded tyres were in an illegal state by then. In fact, data compiled by Halfords reveals that the number of vehicles with tyres below or on the borderline of the minimal legal tread 1.6mm depth leapt by a staggering 71 per cent compared to last year. This situation led Halfords to defer tyre replacements costs until next year to help cash strapped motorists stay safe.

Although hardly inexpensive, tyres are remarkably affordable even though they have grown in size and performance over the years. Cutthroat competition keeps prices competitive; 40 years ago, a typical best brand 175x14 radial, as fitted to the new 190E, was ticketed around the £45 mark (£130). In contrast, a search on the web unearths the much fatter modern Michelin Pilot Sport 4 225/55R17 found on numerous models on offer from under £108 with lesser brand much cheaper still.

When the time does come to replace your car's tyres, you have essentially four choices to make: Premium brands, mid-range and economy brands, and part-worn tyres. And all have their benefits.





Premium

As the term implies, these are best known branded, household-named tyres, fitted by the factory, and ▷

◁△ Finding tyres for old Mercs isn't always easy...

◁ Slick tyre dressing on this 123 Coupe.



“Some 41 million car and commercial tyres were replaced last year”

Tyred out



With more than 700 brands produced globally, are motorists and retailers spoilt for choice or all tyred out? Alan Anderson investigates...

WORDS **ALAN ANDERSON**
IMAGES **LONGSTONE TYRES, FALKEN, MATT RICHARDSON, NOORTJE BLOKLAND, CRAIG PUSEY, JAMES MANN, TERRY OBORNE, STEVE HALL & MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

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Always research the best tyres for your older Merc.



△ Falken explains what the numbers and letters mean.



▷ Michelin's legendary XWX rubber.

"Cutthroat competition keeps prices competitive"

▷ are at the forefront of tyre technology and development to continually push the envelope. By and large, these state-of-the-art designs will possess the best of everything – grip, noise level, comfort, fuel efficiency and wear rate.

This all comes at a price and as a result premium brands are mainly fitted to vehicles of less than five years old. Examples of premium brands include Bridgestone, Michelin, Pirelli and Yokohama.

Mid-range

This sector sits between the top names and the economy tyre, and are the preserve of owners perhaps with their vehicles out of warranty and now on their third tyre change. Some names have become quite well known. Celebrating 40 years of tyre making Falken has been elevated to original equipment status by Mercedes-Benz, no less. A fair number of mid-range tyre manufacturers are second-tier brands made by the big boys. A prime example is Michelin, which also markets Polish made Kormoran and Tigar, the latter originating from Siberia, as well as better known makes such as Uniroyal.

For motorists owning older Mercs who have an eye on costs but still want top performance, a good mid-range tyre is an ideal solution, a point rammed home by Kumho Tyre UK's Marketing Director John Thrupp. "While the old adage of 'You get what you pay for' generally holds true, there remains a huge gulf in quality between the best and worst performing products on the market – with the biggest brand names not always finishing on top."

Manufacturers of mid-range rubber for Mercedes-Benz vehicles include Falken, Kumho and Continental.

Budget tyres

This is where some of the oddest names lurk, and perhaps the silliest of them all – Triangle! But before you smirk… 10 years ago this Chinese maker was used as a whipping boy by a major European rival when demonstrating its new premium tyre against a typical economy alternative. A decade on, and having recently launched its own high performance Sportex range, Triangle is now being hotly tipped as one of the industry's future leading brands!

Price aside, another reason for the surge in the popularity of economy brands is their continually improving performance ▷

Top 10 tyre tips

1 Tyres degenerate and compounds harden which is why they have a shelf life of around six years before replacement is recommended even if there's still plenty of tread left. A new set of uniform tyres will transform the handling and braking of your Mercedes and is far more effective than any suspension upgrade.

2 You can ascertain a tyre's age by looking on the sidewall. Revised markings appeared after 2000 with four-digit numbers showing the month followed by year. For example, '0713' means month seven of 2013.

3 Try not to mix and match tyres, at least on the same axle as individual makes have different compounds and can vary in rolling radius that could cause havoc not only with the handling and roadholding, but also affect the performance and durability of a limited-slip differential particularly on all-wheel drive transmissions.

4 Tyre rotation to even out wear rates is bad practice on modern suspensions as each tyre adapts to its particular axle. Swapping around will affect the steering and handling.

5 Modern speed ratings start at L - 75mph and move to Y - 186mph plus. This does not mean the speed that you choose to travel at but the velocity the vehicle is capable of. Be wary of dropping a speed rating; while not illegal, your insurance company might take a dim view if a claim is ever made. Best consult them first.

6 A dying art but regular inspections are vital, especially on a little used classic. Tyre condition can also be a barometer for various problems where warning signs should be taken on board. Excessive wear in the centre is over-inflation, while conversely too much on the edges is an under-inflated tyre. Irregular wear on one side or feathering points towards steering geometry and suspension issues. Also look for sidewall cracking (an MOT fail point), bulges, kerbing damage and so on.

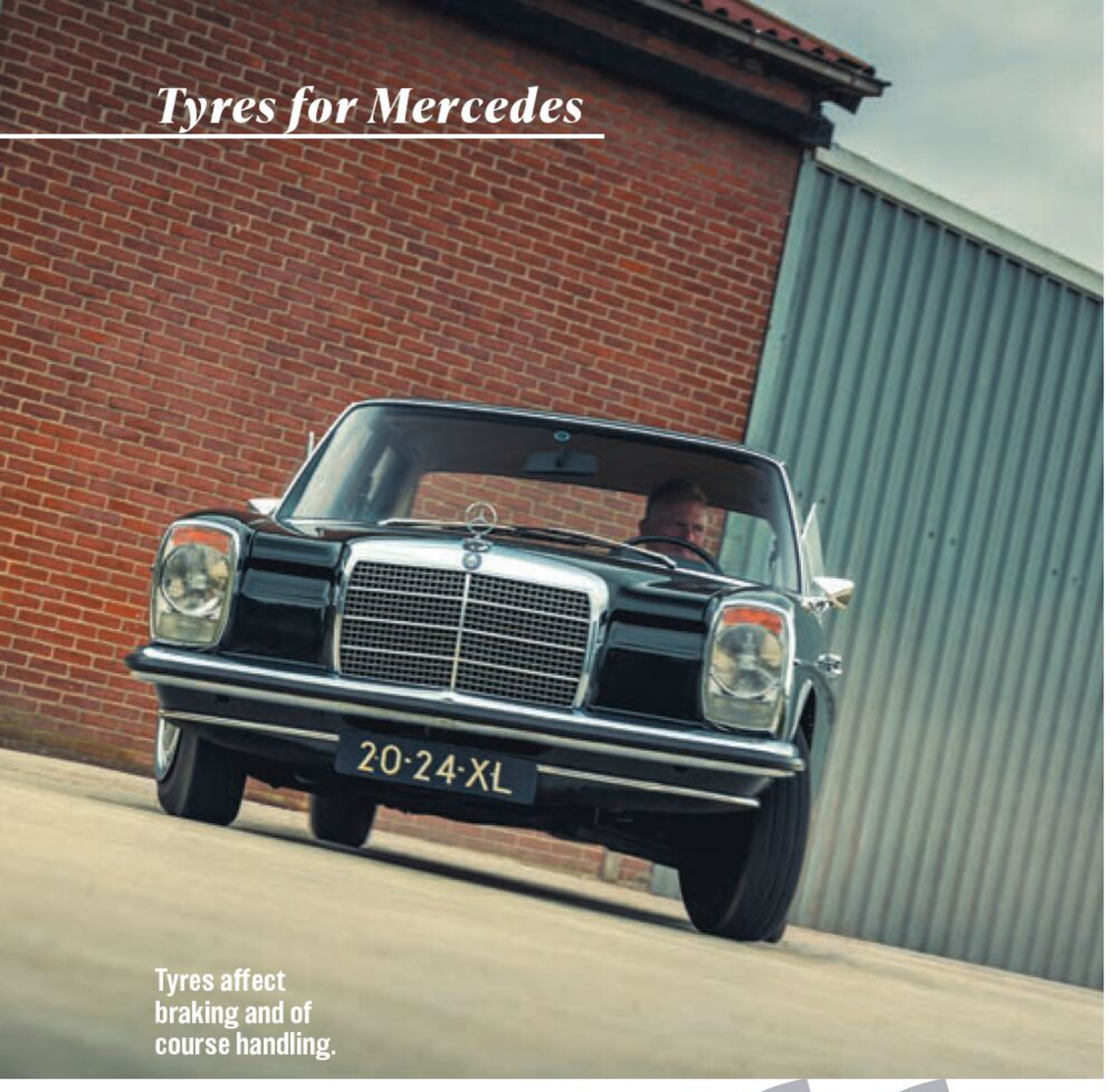
7 Although the UK tyre law demands a tread depth of no less than 1.6mm across the central three-quarters of the tyre, throughout its circumference, regard 2mm as a more sensible limit as wet weather performance reduces drastically from this point once past 3mm. Remember running on illegal tyres can lead to a fine of up to £2,500 and three penalty points - per tyre.

8 At least once in your tenure, your Merc should be treated to a professional all-wheel alignment check and adjust as this covers much more than steering alignment but also front and rear castor and camber settings which can fall out of adjustment due to wear. Not only will it prolong tyre life but can rejuvenate the handling.

9 In the UK we mostly rely on summer tyres. The short-lived seasonal switch from summer to winter tyres has largely petered out, now accounting for less than one per cent of the tyre market. It's quickly being superseded by All Season Tyres (identified by a triple mountain alpine symbol) which while not so good in severe winter conditions provides a better all year-round compromise.

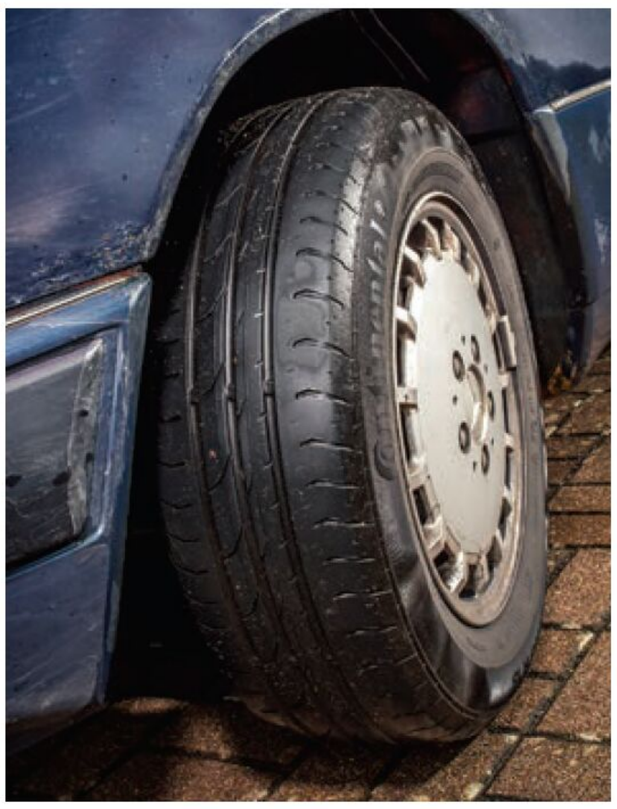
10 With so many brands on the market how can motorists cut through the confusion and purchase the best tyre for their needs and budget? One solution is What Tyre's unique tyre comparison engine, which educates consumers at the pre-sale research stage. This database of over 300,000 tyres compares tyre label data with thousands of third-party magazine tyre tests as well as OE and ESG details to help choose a tyre based on what it does rather just what it costs, says *Tyre and Accessories* magazine.

Tyres for Mercedes



Tyres affect braking and of course handling.







△ Two styles of whitewalls on these Pontons.

△△ Continental PremiumContact 2 on 126-series SEC.

△△▷ We'd avoid part-worn tyres if at all possible.

> **You can ascertain a tyre's age by looking on the sidewall**

▷ and quality levels, although some are better than others. Far from being fringe buys, economy brands (that's budget and mid-range) account for well over half of all UK tyre sales. Just take a note of some of the names you find on older vehicles, and especially second-hand car dealer forecourts. Again, in common with mid-range tyres, a number of premium tyre manufacturers market budget alternatives.

How good is a good 'budget' or 'mid-range' tyre? As one distributor (Tyre-warehouse.co.uk) puts on its website, "Budget manufacturers can be just as good as a premium tyre that came out a few years ago", which is a fair yardstick to judge them by. They probably won't possess the best overall grip, but for those who don't drive around wanting to impress Toto Wolff they may prove more than adequate. And while road noise may be higher, wear rates perhaps greater and fuel efficiency a little down, for the majority of motorists it's a price worth paying and without doubt the safer option when compared to buying part-worn tyres as an alternative. We would class tyres from the likes of Evergreen, Apollo and Lansail as budget quality.

Part-worn tyres

It's reckoned that the part-worn tyre market accounts for just five million out of the 41 million tyres replaced annually. Generally they originate from abroad where tyre laws are much tighter which speak volumes for our regulations! While we can get all self-righteous about the dangers of buying used tyres, in the real world many do and will continue to do so. If you're one, check them carefully for damage including the inner structure – has it been kerbed, run flat or retrieved from a vehicle which had been involved in an accident, for example?

However, you should also question the economics. Notwithstanding its age, a tyre with only around half its life left is likely to represent poor value unless you are only fitting them to make the car saleable as well as legal. For example, a tyre with 4mm tread is good for 10,000 miles maximum but usually less, according to the RAC.

Classic tyres

This is a niche market as it appeals to the connoisseur enthusiast who wants to keep his classic as original as possible. Dougal Cawley, who runs Longstone Tyres (longstonetyres.co.uk), believes too many owners spoil their classic to "save a few pounds". He adds that fitting modern tyres with their greater 'footprints' may enhance roadholding but it ruins the steering feel and handling due to their modern stiffer sidewalls, let alone affecting the ride adversely.

"If you see a modern Mercedes parked up with steering lock on, you'll notice that the front wheels stick proud of the wheelarches at an odd angle. This is called castor and is there to help steering self-centring and overcome the unpleasant effects of a phenomena called tracking. The wide tyres along with the excessive castor make modern cars impossible to steer if it wasn't for modern power steering designs", he told us, adding that a period tyre will make a classic handle like it did when new.

The Blockley Tyre Company was founded some 25 years ago by Julian Mujzub, a real petrolhead and engineer who owns some of the most exclusive classics including a number of Mercedes. The tyres are produced to his own design and have become widely respected and sold direct to keep prices down. He says there's nothing wrong in using mainstream budget tyres – and in fact uses them on his daily driver! Classic tyres cater for obscure sizes mainstream makers can't supply and Mujzub adds that due to the quality of Blockley tyres they needn't be dumped just because they are approaching 10 years of service. "That is why with our radial tyres I guarantee that a customer should drive for 1,000 miles or so, and if these are not the best tyres they have ever driven on, we will refund their money," boasts the company owner.

Pirelli hopes to produce a 195/70VR14 Cinturato CN36, a tyre which was fitted to a large number of classic Mercedes in the 1970s, but for some time now there has not been a decent tyre available in this size, enthuses Cawley. In the end, it all comes down how original you wish to make your classic Mercedes.

Useful contacts

longstonetyres.co.uk
blockleytyre.com
michelin.co.uk
blackcircles.com
bridgestone.co.uk
falkentyre.com
kumhotire.com
whattyre.com
tyresonthedrive.com
halfords.com



▷ Pirelli's Cinturato CN36 tyre for classics.

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Bright ambition

30 years ago this September, Mercedes-Benz presented the 202-series C36 AMG at the Frankfurt motor show. Here, we meet the owner of a rare Light Yellow example originally registered in Rome, Italy

WORDS & IMAGES **MARCO ANNUNZIATA**





"The design, quality of finish, compactness and elegance are exceptional"

◁ Angular AMG bodykit and licks of chrome trim.

◁▽ Subtle hints at this saloon's tuner provenance.

◁◁▽ 17-inch AMC alloys with staggered tyres.

Eligio Camnasio is an avid Mercedes-Benz enthusiast from Como, near Milan in Italy. He has a long history with Mercedes-Benz, which began when his father bought a metallic blue 240 diesel saloon. The relationship has culminated in ownership of this fabulous looking C36 AMG. "The design and performance of Mercedes cars are unique – they have no equal," he says, before adding with a laugh, "Please don't put me in a car other than a Mercedes!"

In 1982, he bought his first Mercedes-Benz – a white 190 carburettor saloon, which of course is a work of Italian designer, Bruno Sacco. "It was perhaps a little slow, but comfortable and reliable," Eligio remembers. Then he bought a blue 190E with five-speed manual gearbox and fuel injection. "That was definitely a better performing car with good fuel consumption." During the next few years, other petrol 190s finished in different colours came and went.

In 1987, he switched to a five-cylinder 190 2.5 diesel more suited to regular commuting. When he no longer needed to travel as many kilometres, Eligio bought another petrol car, a 200T station wagon with carburettors and finished in metallic gold. Eligio considered this Benz both sporty and comfortable.

From 1991 to 2000, many more Mercedes passed through this Italian's hands, including E-Class Coupes and supercharged CLKs – the latter staying in the picture until July 2005 when he purchased the C36.

Registered on October 1 1994, the hot saloon is finished in rare Light Yellow (code 691; also known as *Lichtgelb*) and was previously owned by a good friend of Eligio's. Under the ▷

▷ bonnet is a bored and stroked version of Mercedes' stalwart M104 straight-six, here displacing 3,606cc and making 276bhp at 5,750rpm, with 284lb ft of torque available across 4,000 to 4,750rpm.

The car was registered in Italy by Mercedes-Benz Italia Spa Rome, and was originally owned by a senior Mercedes-Benz executive in the nation's capital city. "I really like the colour," Eligio affirms. "The design, quality of finish, compactness and elegance are exceptional. As for the mechanicals – the 24-valve engine, suspension setup and braking performance are outstanding.

"The car has impressive power," Eligio continues. "Right from the lowest revs, it exhibits vigorous eagerness despite having the automatic gearbox. That said, the four-speed transmission works in the car's favour during normal driving, thanks to the engine's flexibility. The braking system [including 288/278mm front/rear discs] is excellent, and the car's road holding on dry roads is very high. Behaviour on wet roads is good too, thanks to the anti-slip system.

"When I bought the C36 from my friend in 2005, it was in original and well-preserved condition, as the previous owners were also car enthusiasts. In the last two years, I have undertaken several trips in my C36. I was ▷

△ AMC instilled fresh energy in the M104 engine.

◁ The C36 AMC was based on the C280 Sport model.

▷ 5,221 of the C36 AMC made in four years.

▷▷ Lowered suspension a boost for agility.

A new kind of Mercedes

The C36 AMG was the first vehicle jointly developed by Mercedes-Benz and AMG. Based on a C280 Sport, the bore and stroke of that model's 2.8-litre six-cylinder engine were increased from 89.9x73.5mm to 91.0x92.4mm by AMG for its C36. The tuner also installed upgraded pistons, a modified crankshaft and achieved a higher compression ratio, boosting power/torque from 190bhp/199lb ft to 276bhp/284lb ft. The C280 Sport's suspension was lowered by a further 10mm for the C36, and of course AMG's new saloon received a full helping of exterior enhancements including a freer flowing exhaust arrangement. A five-speed automatic gearbox replaced the four-speeder from August 1996 – the same year the C36 served as official F1 Safety Car. It did so in 1997, too.

Between September 1993 and June 1997, Mercedes sold 5,221 examples of the C36 AMG, despite an asking price (DM95,450) that was getting on for double the C280's. A 302bhp C43 model with 4.3-litre V8 followed in October 1997, then came a 5.4-litre C55 with 342bhp V8 in July 1998; both eight-cylinders bowed out in 2000 when the new-generation 203-series C-Class arrived on the scene.

"Right from the lowest revs, it exhibits vigorous eagerness"

"For us Italians, Mercedes-AMGs are cars that arouse interest"



▷ Four-speed auto and carbon effect trim.



▷ able to appreciate the characteristics of the car on the shores of Lake Como, driving along the local narrow roads at moderate speeds with the sunroof open while enjoying the panoramic views," Eligio remembers. "In early April of this year, I participated in a historic car rally in Monza, where I was able to go on a sightseeing tour of the famous motorway layout while having fun. In the afternoon, my C36 AMG was among several cars celebrated thanks to its originality, condition and particularly its colour, so I was awarded a cup and was photographed on the podium of the famous race track.

"Later that month, I re-entered the rally and had the chance to drive on the Monza circuit for 25 minutes at high speed," Eligio adds. "I was able to ask for maximum performance from the car while having lots of fun. The C36 proved reliable, and in terms of handling and braking performance there is absolutely nothing to envy about more modern cars," Eligio affirms. The AMG saloon has also carried Eligio and his wife some 140km in a regularity rally that took in mountain villages and woodland around Lake Como. Naturally, Eligio explored more of what the straight-six was capable of during the event.

The C36's mileage now stands at 169,200km (around 105,000 miles), and all the work done to the car over the years has been carried out by an authorised workshop. Jobs have included replacing cylinder-head gaskets to fix a minor leak, renewing valve guides and valve rubbers, fitting a new fuel pump with fuel filter, and replacing brake components. Suspension arms and bushes have also been replaced, along with the expected spark plug cables, coils, tyres and battery.

"Since I've owned the C36, I haven't carried out any kind of customisation work," Eligio confirms. "When I got the car, the AMG badge on the rear right side of the bootlid and the AMG badges on the engine cover were missing, but everything else is in original specification. I have the original AMG badges, but I prefer not to apply them for aesthetic reasons."

Eligio admits that he isn't particularly fond of the AMG logo, but he would certainly like to have more cars from Affalterbach in his garage. "I would love to own a 202-series C43 AMG Estate or Saloon, as well as a 203-series C32 and 210-series E55," he says. "For us Italians, Mercedes-AMGs are cars that arouse interest, are reliable, offer excellent performance, are easy to drive, and have a unique engine sound."

For now though, Eligio will happily make do with this brightest of C36s, as well as his 1999 S500, SLK200 Kompressor, CLK240 and E200 Coupe. It's a tough life…

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz C36 AMG (W202)

Engine M104 3,606cc 6-cyl **Power** 276bhp@5,750rpm **Torque** 284lb ft@4,000-4,750rpm **Transmission** 4-speed auto, RWD
Weight 1,560kg **0-62mph** 6.7sec **Top speed** 155mph **Fuel consumption** 20.8mpg **Years produced** 1993-1997

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

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In the latest instalment of our buying-focused series, we reveal our top six used Mercedes available for around £20,000

WORDS GUY BAKER IMAGES DEALERS

With a £20,000 budget for a used Mercedes, you'll have plenty of exciting choices. In this issue, we've focused on more contemporary models designed and manufactured in the last 20 years. Scouring the classifieds, we've unearthed six of the finest Mercedes you could buy, with each model offering something different – so there should be at least two or three Mercedes here that appeal to you. And although they look and feel pretty modern, they are all good value. Just make sure you follow our buying tips!



Optional AMG Aerodynamic package.

BUYING TIPS
Your A45 AMG must come with a full M-B or AMG specialist service history, and it's best to avoid any heavily modified examples. A few early cars had issues with the turbos and in some cases the dual-clutch gearbox. Some electrical faults can prove tricky and expensive to fix, so test everything before you buy.

Super hatchback
A45 AMG 4Matic (W176)

Mercedes' definitive super hatch is a blast to drive – but make sure you buy a well-maintained example

Mercedes' original W176 pocket rocket single-handedly re-energised the brand, appealing to a younger demographic who valued performance and tuning potential just as highly as brand image. Employing a blueprint more traditionally associated with rally cars, the A45 AMG packed a tuneable two-litre turbocharged motor, four-wheel drive and a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission with steering wheel-mounted paddleshifters.

The 2013 to 2015 cars produced 355bhp and 332lb ft of torque, whilst facelifted 2015 to 2018 models claimed 376bhp, plus revised gear ratios, and AMG Dynamic Plus and Race driving modes. And there are now plenty of pre- and post-facelifted A45 AMGs on the market, with our £20,000 budget bagging an average-mile, 2015 car such as this 15-plate, Polar Silver example for sale at Culloden Car Sales (www.cullodencarsales.co.uk) near Inverness.

Stickered at £19,995, it came with all the usual factory AMG goodies, plus the Memory Package, the AMG Aerodynamics Package, an AMG sports exhaust, black 19-inch AMG alloys, and a 5.8-inch colour display.



△ Four-wheel drive and Race Start launch control function.



△ Trim in the style of carbon fibre; paddleshifters on wheel.

Just the facts

A45 AMG 4Matic (W176)

Engine 1,991cc 4-cyl turbocharged

Power/torque 355bhp/332lb ft **Transmission** 7-speed auto, 4WD

0-62mph 4.6sec **Top speed** 155mph

Fuel consumption 40.9mpg **CO2 emissions** 161-165g/km

£20,000 buys: 2015 A45 AMG with 54,000 miles



The CLS is a stylish and engaging steer, with space for four.

BUYING TIPS

The 218-series CLS seems to possess a good reliability record but look out for any problems with the optional air suspension, any early signs of corrosion and any hint of oil leaks from the engine oil cooler seal. Yours should have a complete service history, no obvious issues with the DPF, and run smoothly with seamless gear changes and no signs of throttle hesitation. CLS alloys are very easily kerbed.

Luxury coupe
CLS350d AMG Line (C218)

Classy, refined and efficient, the torquey CLS350d Coupe is also attractively priced

Mercedes' 218-series CLS is now excellent value for money, with the V6 350d model in AMG Line guise arguably the pick of the range. Good looking, luxuriously appointed and offering surprisingly good fuel economy, it's supremely comfortable to drive, with every journey likely to put a smile on your face.

Based on a Mercedes E-Class platform, the second-generation CLS350d carries a three-litre six-cylinder turbodiesel engine producing 254bhp and a chunky 457lb ft of torque. Mated to Mercedes' impressive nine-speed automatic transmission, this 155mph Coupe can approach 50mpg on longer journeys, and there's plenty of pick up in all gears. The 6.5-second 0-62mph time isn't bad either!

A pretty popular model when new, there are quite a few used examples around, with something like this 52,000-mile, Titanium Grey, 2015 CLS350d Coupe AMG Line well within our budget. Advertised for £18,850 at Adams and Sons in Leicestershire (www.adamsandsons.co.uk), this car came with a comprehensive spec including 19-inch alloys.



V6 turbodiesel engine offers the best of all worlds.



△ Compared with the E-Class, the CLS interior boasts much larger quantities of premium grade trim.

Just the facts

CLS350d (C218)

Engine 2,987cc V6 turbocharged

Power/torque 254bhp/457lb ft **Transmission** 9-speed auto, RWD

0-62mph 6.5sec **Top speed** 155mph

Fuel consumption 51.4mpg **CO2 emissions** 142g/km

£20,000 buys: 2015 CLS350d with 42,000 miles

Hot saloon

E63 AMG (W212)

An epic AMG E-Class Saloon for less than £20,000 – what more could you ask for?

Like a boxer in a Savile Row suit, Mercedes' last normally-aspirated V8 AMG is the epitome of style yet delivers brutal performance. And with most of its depreciation behind it, the pre-facelifted 212-series E63 AMG can be bought and enjoyed without worrying too much about residual value.

Powered by AMG's now legendary, 6.2-litre M156 V8, the E63 completes the 0-62mph dash in just 4.5 seconds. The AMG seven-speed automatic transmission offers four driver-selectable modes, while an optional AMG Performance Package added stiffened suspension, a limited-slip rear differential with 40 per cent lock, and a boot lip spoiler.

You could pick up a high-mileage example for less than £20,000, but with one eye on the future we'd look to buy a slightly lower mileage car with a few options – such as this 57,000-mile, 2010 E63 we discovered at George Kingsley Prestige & Performance (www.georgekingsley.co.uk) in Colchester.

For sale at £19,996, it boasted both the AMG Exterior Carbon Package and the AMG Performance Package, in addition to the standard AMG-spec items.





Just the facts

E63 AMG (W212)

Engine 6,208cc V8 naturally aspirated

Power/torque 518bhp/465lb ft

Transmission 7-speed auto, RWD

0-62mph 4.5sec **Top speed** 155mph

Fuel consumption 22.4mpg

CO2 emissions 295g/km

£20,000 buys: 2010 E63 AMG with 57,000 miles

BUYING TIPS

Given the complexity of the E63, it claims impressive reliability but you should still look out for any sign of coolant or oil leaks, failing camshaft adjusters, failing fuel injectors (it's wise to replace these every 60,000 to 70,000 miles) and leaks from the power steering system. Any issues with the AMG air suspension can be expensive to fix. Many owners fit aftermarket brake discs that can be just as good as original items but are cheaper.



△△ Early W212 E63 packs the hand built 6.2 V8.

△ Optional carbon trim and performance pack.

◁ Alcantara finish on the multi-spoke helm.

BUYING TIPS

Aside from possessing a complete service history, your GLA200d should have no indication of any issues with the DPF, 4Matic rear differential or the transmission. Watch out for oil leaks too, and note that the GLA doesn't have a spare wheel. There have been a number of recalls on the GLA so check with your local Mercedes dealer that the car you're thinking of buying has been properly fixed.



The comfy, first-gen GLA is an underrated Mercedes in our book.

Stylish SUV
ML350 Bluetec 4Matic AMG Sport (W166)

A great all-round SUV, offering a lot of metal for your money – but make sure you buy a well-maintained example of this off-roader

Mercedes' GLE is now a successful established model, but to many it will always be known as the M-Class, with the last examples to carry that original name now among the best-value SUVs on the used market. And in ML350 Bluetec AMG Sport guise you really can have your cake and eat it. Stylish and possessing strong road presence, this 2012 to 2015 model with its 254bhp is also good off-road and is economical for a big SUV. Despite its size, performance is accomplished too, the 457lb ft of torque helping achieve a 139mph top speed and a 7.4-second 0-62mph time.

Our £20,000 budget buys a 2013 or 2014 example with around 40,000 miles, like this two-owner, Palladium Silver car for sale at Ashington Autodrome (www.ashingtonautodrome.co.uk) in Northumberland. Advertised at £18,990, it looked in great condition and had black leather upholstery, Comand sat nav, heated front seats, front and rear Parktronic, cruise control, Bluetooth, 19-inch AMG alloys and LED daytime running lights.



BUYING TIPS

There were a number of recalls on the W166 ML affecting the seat belts, potential oil leaks and the wipers, so check with Mercedes that all remedial work has been done on the car you're considering buying. Your ML350 Bluetec should come with a blemish-free service history and no sign of oil leaks, DPF issues or damaged glow plugs. And we'd recommend the gearbox oil is changed every 50,000 miles – irrespective of what Mercedes dealers may tell you.





▷ Softer styling for this still capable 4x4.

Just the facts

ML350 Bluetec 4Matic (W166)

Engine 2,987cc V6 turbocharged

Power/torque 254bhp/457lb ft

Transmission 7-speed auto, 4WD 0-62mph 7.4sec Top speed 139mph

Fuel consumption 39.2mpg CO2 emissions 189g/km

£20,000 buys: 2014 ML350 CDI/Bluetec AMG Sport with 40,000 miles

Comfortable crossover
GLA200d (X156)

Better looking than its rivals and highly economical, this turbodiesel-powered GLA makes an ideal urban runabout

The small crossover SUV sector is booming in the UK right now, and Mercedes' stylish GLA has grown in popularity, with the second-generation H247 model a popular choice. But it's the original X156 version in 200d guise that offers the finest value for money. And with perky performance, impressive 67mpg combined fuel economy and an inclusive spec in AMG Line form, it makes a great used buy – particularly in four-wheel drive configuration.

Majoring on style and economy rather than speed or off-road ability, our budget would put you behind the wheel of an immaculate 2018 example with around 35,000 miles – like this silver GLA200d 4Matic AMG Line Executive automatic we found at Holdcroft (www.holdcroft.com) in Hanley. Advertised for £19,599 and packing a full service history, this car had covered 34,000 miles and came with 18-inch AMG alloy wheels, Artico leather upholstery and a big central display.

Just the facts

GLA200d 4Matic (X156)

Engine 2,143cc 4-cyl turbocharged

Power/torque 134bhp/221lb ft

Transmission 7-speed auto, 4WD

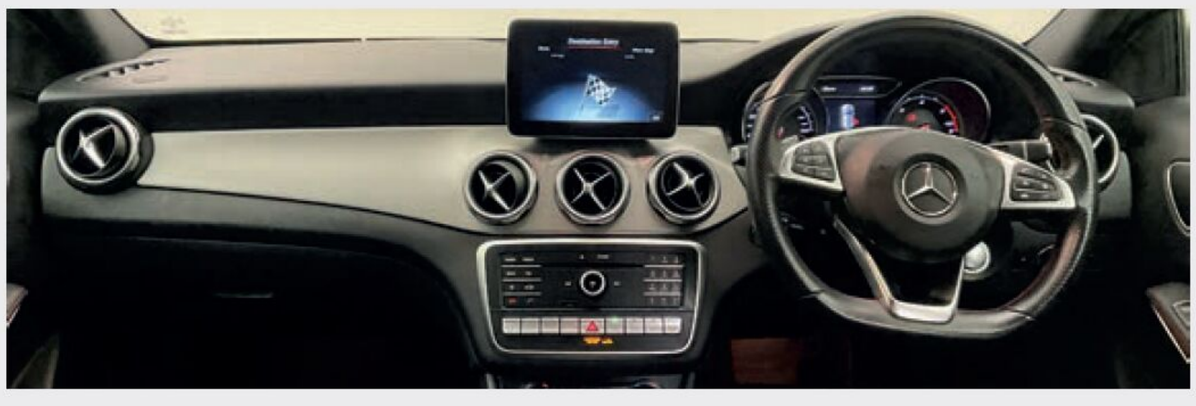
0-62mph 9.1sec Top speed 124mph

Fuel consumption 44.1mpg CO2 emissions 147g/km

£20,000 buys: 2018 GLA200d 4Matic AMG Line automatic with 33,000 miles



◁ Petrol and diesel versions are available.



▷ More space inside here than in the A-Class hatch.



BUYING TIPS

The good news is that the SLC200 seems to suffer very few reliability issues, but always check the electrics, roof mechanism and transmission. Your SLC Roadster should pack a complete service history record, and check both the alloys and bodywork for any scrapes, dents or cracks. A few owners have reported rattling noises from the exhaust manifold, and worn/damaged window seals.

Sleek roadster

SLC200 Sport (R172)

Living proof that a roadster needn't be a fire-breathing monster to make a pleasurable drive

Fun without the faff, Mercedes' R172 SLC200 Sport proves that a roadster doesn't have to have loads of power to be enjoyable to drive. With a two-litre four-cylinder engine producing a relatively modest 181bhp but a decent 221lb ft torque from 1,200rpm to 4,000rpm, the 2015 to 2020 SLC200 Sport looks good, has a folding metal roof, packs plenty of low-down punch, and offers proper rear-wheel drive handling. This handsome Mercedes is entertaining even at sensible speeds. Sport models come with 17-inch alloys as standard, whilst AMG Line cars come with 18-inchers; a six-speed manual gearbox was standard, while a 9G-Tronic automatic cost £1,600 extra.

Our £20,000 budget buys a cherished 30,000-mile 2016 car, like this immaculate looking SLC200 Sport automatic at SKS Cars Ltd in Milton Keynes (www.skscars.co.uk). At £19,995 it represented great value thanks to the £7,350 worth of optional extras, including black leather upholstery, Airscarf, ambient lighting, a Harman Kardon Logic 7 surround sound system, heated front seats, Thermotronic climate control, Comand Online navigation, the Memory pack, the Mirror Pack, and front and rear parking sensors.



△ The SLC Roadster looks fantastic with the vario-roof in place or tucked away inside the boot.



△ The cabin is hard wearing and blessed with bold details; optional Airscarf neck heating a must.

Just the facts

SLC200 (R172)

Engine 1,991cc 4-cyl turbocharged

Power/torque 181bhp/221lb ft

Transmission 9-speed auto, RWD

0-62mph 6.9sec **Top speed** 147mph

Fuel consumption 47.9mpg **CO2 emissions** 137g/km

£20,000 buys: 2016 SLC200 Sport automatic with 30,000 miles



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Power trip

There are great deals to be had right now on some 63 AMG models, as our used car market expert reveals

WORDS **GUY BAKER** IMAGES **AUTOEXPERT, CARDIFF CAR SALES & SPORTS AND PRESTIGE OF LICHFIELD**







Mint C63 AMGs are commanding strong money.

UK drivers are covering fewer miles than they used to five years ago, due in part to the post-Covid rise in home working. And with rising prices squeezing household budgets like never before, for many drivers it makes perfect sense to own just one vehicle rather than two or three – but one that can cover all duties.

And for those who don't cover a large annual mileage an AMG estate could prove an ideal choice. Offering the best of almost all worlds – they're not only potent, plush and carry oodles of kit and kudos, but they are also highly exclusive and – if you buy at the right point in the depreciation curve – pretty affordable too. So much so that every seller we have spoken to recently was very happy to offer a decent discount on the AMG estates they were advertising for sale.

Tempted? Well, the best AMG estates to target are those aged between 10 and 15 years old, where the vagaries of fashion have ensured they are no longer seen as highly desirable by the masses, but they are still far off attaining classic status – and getting snapped up by collectors. And three stand out as ideal prospects – the 204-series C63 AMG, the 212-series E63 AMG and the 218-series CLS63 AMG Shooting Brake.

The last one of these is arguably the most appealing, with its unique styling and off-the-radar buyer visibility – which translates into low demand and large discounts. Target something like this Obsidian Black, 2013 CLS63 AMG Shooting Brake we spotted for sale at autoExpert in Lytham, Lancashire (www.lythamcars.co.uk)





△ Leggy but smart CLS Shooting Brake yours for £20,995.



△ Under 27 grand will get you an E63 with V8 biturbo engine.

and you should expect to lever at least a grand off the £20,995 asking price. And maybe more, as this example had covered 103,000 miles.

It was wonderfully specced though and came with anthracite exclusive nappa leather seats, high gloss carbon fibre detailing with anthracite Alcantara headlining, heated and cooled dynamic seats with driver's memory function, a rear facing camera, auto dimming mirrors, active parking assist, a sunroof, Comand sat nav and media, Speedtronic cruise control and the Easy-Pack powered tailgate. And it was sold with a six-month Gold RAC warranty and 12 months of RAC roadside assistance.

Practical powerhouses

If you're prepared to spend another five grand or so then you could bag a more traditional looking, lower mileage E63 AMG Estate instead. Demand is slightly higher but if you offered £25,000 for this silver, 2013 E63 AMG Estate we saw at Cardiff Car Sales (www.cardiff-carsales.co.uk) then you'd be very close to agreeing a deal.

With 69,400 miles on the clock, and an impressive spec that included a heap of optional extras originally valued at £23,000, this car was advertised at £26,495. And there are a few other similar E63 wagons for sale at the moment.

For a similar sum, however, you could buy one of the finest, 204-series C63 AMG Estates around. This one-owner example was for sale at Sports and Prestige of Lichfield (sportsandprestigeoflichfield.co.uk) advertised for £26,500 with 30,700 miles under its wheels. We reckon you could do a deal nearer to £25,000 though, as most buyers simply won't pay much more than this for a C63 AMG of this age.

▶ *Fancy something more rugged? Then check out our top three £20,000 Mercedes-Benz SUVs instead, detailed on page 76!*

Forecourt find

220SEb Coupe (W111)

It may not be the first classic Mercedes-Benz coupe that comes to mind, but the W111 220SEb would make a charming and exclusive addition to any collection. Particularly if it's in as good condition as this stunning, fully restored, 1962 Mid Blue metallic example, advertised for sale at Justin Banks in Kent. Stickered at £49,995, it had covered a lowly 47,000 miles and was a UK-supplied automatic with cream leather interior piped in an exterior-complementing blue.

The car was offered with a history file including photos of the restoration work, and a heap of invoices from Steve Redfearn Mercedes and other Mercedes specialists. Justin Banks reckons this 220SEb owes its previous owner £80,000 in restoration and maintenance costs.

Dealer information Justin Banks
Tel 07794 576886
Web www.justinbanks.com



△ Previous owner spent £80,000 on maintenance.



▷ Cream leather under that Mid Blue metallic paintwork.



▽ This 1962 Coupe was supplied new to the UK market.



Auction spotlight

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

- **CLK320 Cabriolet Avantgarde** 3.2-litre, petrol, auto, 2004/04-plate, 81,000 miles, **£1,950**
- **CLS320 CDI Coupe** 3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2006/56-plate, 103,000 miles, **£3,500**
- **E320 CDI Avantgarde** 3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2006/56-plate, 76,000 miles, **£4,150**
- **SLK200 Kompressor** 1.8-litre, petrol, auto, 2006/06-plate, 89,000 miles, **£4,750**
- **S320 CDI L** 3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2007/57-plate, 92,000 miles, **£5,900**
- **ML63 AMG** 6.2-litre, petrol, auto, 2006/56-plate, 112,000 miles, **£8,450**
- **SLC200 AMG Line** 2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2017/17-plate, 30,000 miles, **£18,800**
- **GLA200 AMG Line Executive** 1.6-litre, petrol, auto, 2018/68-plate, 40,000 miles, **£19,400**
- **CLA180 Coupe AMG Line** 1.3-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/19-plate, 46,000 miles, **£21,500**
- **E400d 4Matic AMG Line** 2.9-litre, diesel, auto, 2019/19-plate, 71,000 miles, **£22,000**
- **AMG A35 4Matic Premium** 2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/19-plate, 33,000 miles, **£25,150**
- **GLE250d 4Matic AMG Night Edition** 2.1-litre, diesel, auto, 2018/68-plate, 56,000 miles, **£26,300**
- **AMG C43 4Matic Estate Premium Plus** 3.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/19-plate, 46,000 miles, **£28,800**
- **AMG E63** 5.5-litre, petrol, auto, 2016/16-plate, 29,000 miles, **£29,100**
- **GLC220d 4Matic Coupe AMG Line** 2.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2020/20-plate, 27,000 miles, **£32,775**

And remember...

Always arrive early at car auctions, if in person then pick up the sale catalogue and examine the vehicles in the line-up before the bidding starts. In addition to the hammer price, you'll have to pay a small buyer's fee. You'll need to provide a deposit of at least £500 (in cash or by Maestro or Visa Delta debit card) but the balance of the purchase price and the buyer's fee can be paid by banker's draft, cash, cheque, telegraphic transfers, credit or debit card.
Find your nearest auction house check out www.british-car-auctions.co.uk or www.nama-uk.com

Mercedes market

Knowing the Mercedes-Benz marketplace means you can make the best buying decisions. This requires up-to-date information, however, which is why we generate fresh data every issue, to give you the best chance of bagging a great deal. Colour, spec, fuel type, mileage and drivetrain all affect a car's residual value...

The top 6 best-selling used Mercedes

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

1 A-Class (21.6%)
2 C-Class (21.5%)
3 E-Class (13.3%)
4 GLC-Class (5.9%)
5 CLA-Class (5.5%)
6 GLA-Class (5.4%)

What's in a colour?

The colour of your Mercedes could affect its future desirability and its residual value. So, what are the top five colours on the used Mercedes market?

1 Black (28.6%)
2 Silver (19.6%)
3 Grey (17.5%)
4 White (16.4%)
5 Blue (10.1%)

Miles ahead

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

Less than 50,000 miles 56.7%
Between 50,000 and 80,000 miles 23.1%
More than 80,000 miles 20.2%

Fuel watch

How are used Mercedes powered?

Diesel 54.1%
Petrol 39.5%
Hybrid 4.5%
Full electric 1.9%

Drivetrain

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

Four-wheel drive 21.8%
Front-wheel drive 32.3%
Rear-wheel drive 45.9%

TOP THREE

£20,000 SUVs

Despite environmental concerns about the use of SUVs, particularly in urban areas, their popularity in the UK is still on the increase. And with a proliferation of models from many manufacturers over the last few years, the choice of 4x4s now available to used buyers is wider than ever. Mercedes-Benz has expanded its new SUV range to include models of all shapes, sizes and powertrains, but the best value cars are still very much in the used market. Below are three of the finest examples available for a budget of around £20,000. First up is the compact GLA based on the A-Class hatchback, followed by the C-Class-derived GLC. A curveball comes in the form of a V8-engined GL. Which would you choose?



GLA220d (X156)

The smallest SUV in the Mercedes range is also the most fuel efficient, with mid-50s combined fuel economy quite possible from the first-generation GLA220d. But despite its frugal nature the 220d can still provide feisty 135mph performance, thanks to an impressive 258lb ft of torque which is available from just 1,400rpm. Our budget buys a 2016 AMG Line automatic with 35,000 miles and a high specification that includes 19-inch alloys, Speedtronic cruise control and a powered tailgate.



GLC250d (X254)

Mercedes mid-range, 201bhp GLC250d diesel is stylish in AMG Line guise, quick and surprisingly capacious too. Twenty grand puts you behind the wheel of a 2016 Premium Plus example with around 85,000 miles. Almost all cars come with a few optional extras, so you can expect to enjoy things like 19- or 20-inch AMG alloys, heated front seats, parking sensors, LED headlamps and running lights, climate control, a Burmester surround sound system, cruise control and an infotainment system with large display.



GL500 (X164)

Assuming you're not intending to take your SUV off-road regularly then Mercedes' seven-seat SUV – the 383bhp GL500 – is within budget. £20,000 buys a 2010 example with around 50,000 miles, 20-inch alloy wheels and a very well-equipped cabin. Of course, that 5.5-litre V8 is juicy, managing 21.2mpg on the combined cycle, while CO2 emissions top 320g/km so road tax won't be cheap, but this handsome behemoth will hit 62mph from standing in just 6.5 seconds and has a 3.5-tonne braked towing capacity.

Latest products and accessories

Mansory FD.15 forged wheels

Mansory's latest FD.15 forged alloy wheels come in 21-, 22- and 24-inch sizes, and are designed for Mercedes, Lamborghini and Rolls-Royce models. Available in any custom colour, as well as default Black Diamond, they come with a variety of different offsets and will fit the 223-series S-Class, the R232 SL-Class, the AMG GT 4-door and the W463 G-Class. There's a Mansory dealership in Knightsbridge, London. Find out more at www.mansory.com/dealer/mansory-uk.



Mercedes-Benz Brussels Keychain

This official, die-cast zinc Brussels Keychain has a high-sheen polished finish and a rotating Mercedes star. Available from all Mercedes-Benz dealers for a reasonable £10, it comes with three mini split rings and is sold in both silver (catalogue number B66957516) and gold (catalogue number B66953741) forms. The Brussels Keychain has an overall length of approximately 9cm.





Design Engineering Radiator Relief

Design Engineering's Radiator Relief is a coolant additive that promises to improve your car's radiator performance by transferring heat. Designed to reduce the surface tension of the coolant, this coolant additive can reduce engine operating temperature by as much as 17C thereby reducing engine wear and improving reliability. Radiator Relief is safe for all alloys including aluminium, it is biodegradable, water soluble, non-corrosive and non-toxic – and no pre-mixing is required. Order part number 40200 for petrol, and 40204 for diesel engines at www.designengineering.com. Both versions are priced at £7.85.

Signature Tune A250

Several iterations of the W176 A250 were offered by Mercedes – the pre-facelift AMG Sport and 'Engineered by AMG' versions, as well as the post-facelift AMG and 4Matic models. Here's how to improve them...



The A250 went up against the VW Golf GTI hot hatchback.

A popular choice with used buyers, the 2012 to 2018 W176 A250 claims a readily tuneable turbocharged engine, a seven-speed automatic transmission and the optional bonus of four-wheel drive from 2015. In pre-facelift AMG Sport and harder core Engineered by AMG models, the 1,991cc, turbocharged four-cylinder engine produced 208bhp at 5,500 rpm and 258lb ft at 1,200 to 4,000rpm. For the 2015 facelift, power was increased to 215bhp. As you'd expect, the 4Matic cars have a slight advantage in the sprint from zero to 62mph, but all are capable of achieving that benchmark speed in 6.6 seconds or less, and all top out at 149mph. A seven-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox was standard fit on all but the post-facelift A250 in front-wheel drive.

Out of the box, the A250 is enjoyable to drive but quite a few owners have decided to boost their car's performance and styling. That said, when it comes to buying one, we'd recommend you purchase an example that hasn't been modified. And make sure you carry out a professional diagnostic check on the car to ensure everything is working as it should. Prices start at around £11,000.





Engine

Most owners start their modifying journey with a stage 1 ECU remap, which will make a substantial difference to the A250's acceleration and throttle response. The exact gains you could make will depend on what other ancillaries you may also fit (like an air filter, induction kit and a sports exhaust), but you can expect to achieve at least 255bhp and 310lb ft of torque. For even more power, your A250 will require a performance exhaust and larger intercooler.

Transmission

The factory seven-speed automatic DCT transmission can also be remapped to provide marginally faster and smoother gear changes - a few tuning houses can do this for you but do ensure you don't exceed the safe torque limit. Most A250 owners stick with the standard transmission, however.

Suspension

The A250's factory Sport suspension setup can be enhanced for fast road or track use with lowering springs from Eibach or H&R, or a full-blown coil-over system from Eibach, Bilstein, KW or H&R. A front strut brace will tighten things up too, as will an Eibach anti-roll bar kit.

Brakes

Original pads and discs can be uprated with items from the likes of Wilwood, Brembo, EBC and AP Racing, which all offer suitable pad and disc alternatives. Some owners have also fitted braided brake hoses from either Goodridge or Halo with uprated DOT 5.1 brake fluid. If you ever plan to take your A250 on track, this is a wise move.

Wheels and bodywork

Most A250 owners have stuck with their original 17- or 18-inch AMG alloys, but many larger and mostly multi-spoke aftermarket designs are available, including from makers such as Brabus and Lorinser. Just make sure your choice doesn't adversely affect the car's ride (the Engineered by AMG version is already pretty stiff), or add to the unsprung mass. And remember - exterior styling tweaks should be kept to a minimum if you are concerned about resale value.

Interior

Quite a few owners have upgraded interior items such as seats from the AMG A45, aftermarket trim and infotainment updates. Carbon fibre trim items and custom floor mats are popular with younger owners of the A250 hatchback.





'THE BEST OR NOTHING'
Gottlieb Daimler

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NEXT ISSUE



POWER HUNGRY

124-series 500E with six-litre AMG V8 installed from new



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Mercedes ENTHUSIAST December/January 2024 issue **ON SALE** November 17th

Contents are subject to change



Top touring

Blessed with long legs and a torquey V8, the Bruno Sacco-designed SEC is among Mercedes' most loved modern classics. Here's what you need to know about the popular 500 model...

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **STEVE HALL**

Few manufacturers have seriously attempted to emulate Mercedes-Benz's long-standing success in the full-size, luxury coupe niche. Many well-appointed coupes down the years have worn other nameplates, but only Stuttgart can claim an unbroken seven-decade timeline. Perhaps rivals have felt that achievable volume would not hit the financial sweet spot, or maybe that Mercedes' long dominance has made it a no-go area.

Mercedes did depart from its normal luxury coupe format in 1971 when, for cost and timing reasons, it opted to replace the grand W111 Coupe – which by then had evolved into the fuel-injected 280SE 3.5 model – with what was a hardtop version of the 107-series Roadster rather than base the Coupe on the forthcoming 116-series S-Class. That model never quite lived up to its predecessor's status, but a decade later the Bruno Sacco-penned C126 SEC emphatically restored the king-sized coupe to the Mercedes-Benz range. Unveiled at the Frankfurt motor show in September 1981, two years after the 126-series S-Class on which it was based had appeared, and built for a decade, this handsome coupe, 85mm less in wheelbase and length, and V8-engined only, left no doubt as to where Mercedes' aspirations for it lay – at the top of the market.

After many years of surprisingly low values, C126s in good condition are now enthusing the classic car market, but although values have risen in recent years, for the last 18 months prices have remained the same or perhaps even dropped a little. It's therefore a 'modern classic' Mercedes that remains relatively affordable, and for many the added bonus is that it's very much an 'analogue' car bereft of the electronics that would appear in the next generation of models, and in many cases blight their reliability.

But even the youngest C126 is now 32 years old, so can it sufficiently defy its age to be a usable motorcar? Here we focus on the model sold in the highest number, the 500SEC, to find out.

Design and evolution

A stablemate to the 380SEC, whose Bosch K-Jetronic, 3.8-litre M116, two-valve engine produced 201bhp and 232lb ft of torque, the 500SEC was powered by a five-litre version of the same V8 (except coded M117), giving 228bhp and 299lb ft. Every C126 used the same four-speed automatic transmission.

To compensate for the structural rigidity lost due to the absence of B-pillars, the front A-pillars were reinforced with high-strength tubes, and the roof frame section was stiffened too. The SEC tipped the scales at slightly less than the 126 Saloon, nonetheless.

Inside, the SEC was very similar to the saloon, with the same fascia and instruments. The wheelbase was 30mm longer than the SLC's, and rear legroom was better, and if not actually generous, then adequate for adult occupants; the 30mm lower roof line compared to the 126 Saloon did not noticeably reduce rear headroom. Due to the pillarless side windows, we saw the seat belt 'butlers' for the first time, which

Spotted for sale

PRIVATE SELLER
500SEC
1989/G, dark blue, beige leather 159,000 miles, some exterior work required, £13,990, Herefordshire



electrically presented the belts from their shoulder-level mounts to front seat occupants.

There was little urgently needing done by the mid-term facelift, in September 1985 for the 1986 model season. Distinguishing the revised model on the outside were slightly different bumpers, body side claddings with a plain instead of a ribbed surface, and road wheels that at 15 inches in diameter were an inch larger (and half an inch wider) than previously, which saw the tyre profile slightly lowered from 70- to 65-series – a radical move for Mercedes-Benz in those days! The bigger rims were also a plainer looking, 15-hole design than the 1970s 'Mexican hat' style. There were bigger brakes too, and work was done on the transmission differential to quieten it.

At this point, the 500SEC engine switched to electronic ignition and electro-mechanically regulated Bosch KE-Jetronic fuelling, boosting output by 14bhp to 242bhp, torque all but unchanged. Only the 500SEC survived the facelift in terms of model badging, as the 380SEC became the 4.2-litre 420SEC, while the 500 lost flagship status due to the arrival of the 5,547cc 560SEC.

By now, BMW and to a lesser extent Audi were becoming more serious rivals to Mercedes-Benz, particularly in terms of engine output, so two years later, in autumn 1987, all three engines were uprated. The 500SEC's output then stood at 261bhp at 5,200rpm and 299lb ft at 4,000rpm, this the engine tune until production ended in September 1991.

The C126 SEC was a big success, selling strongly to the end, buyers perhaps sensing that what was to follow – the 140-series S-Class – wouldn't exude the same appeal, despite its crushing efficiency and modernity. The 500SEC was the biggest seller of the four variants, with nearly 32,000 delivered worldwide.

Driving the 500SEC

You could happily own an SEC on the basis of its styling alone, for it is surely one of the carmaker's most elegant and best proportioned shapes. It exudes beauty, charisma and superiority from every angle, arguably the only flaw the incongruously clunky door handles. And while the C126's design is from the 1970s, you would not think that from its driving manners. The five-litre V8 is the sweetest 126 engine, and the 500SEC overwhelmingly feels a restful, serene car to pilot, the motor barely heard at low revs, and the automatic gearbox smooth for its time. Increase the pace a little and you will discover a big car that handles like a small one, with unexpected nimbleness, and quite a firm chassis setup.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 500SEC (C126)

Engine	M117 4,973cc V8
Power	228bhp@4,750rpm
Torque	299lb ft@3,000rpm
Transmission	4-speed auto, RWD
Weight	1,610kg
0-62mph	8.1sec
Top speed	140mph
Fuel consumption	18.6mpg
Years produced	10.1981-09.1985

Mercedes-Benz 500SEC (C126)

Engine	M117 4,973cc V8
Power	242bhp@4,750rpm/261bhp@5,200rpm
Torque	295lb ft@3,750rpm/299lb ft @4,000rpm
Transmission	4-speed auto, RWD
Weight	1,620/1,650kg
0-62mph	7.3/7.2sec
Top speed	143/146mph
Fuel consumption	18.3/17.9mpg
Years produced	09.1985-09.1987/09.1987-09.1991

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for cars without a catalyst; fuel consumption according to EEC urban

In more recent S-Class Coupe generations, the driver sits low, but the C126 offers a higher and more commanding driving position, hence with its waistline at shoulder- rather than neck-level there is a greater feeling of openness when all four windows are dropped. The SEC's seats – leather was standard, but velour was available – have been improved on by successors, but they support where it is needed, and their electric adjustment and the motorised telescopic movement of the steering wheel allow the perfect posture to be easily attained. In this era, Mercedes believed in combining austerity and quality, with sparingly applied walnut veneer on the dash and transmission tunnel the only decorative aspect of the cabin.

What you'll pay

There are two important points to bear in mind on 500SEC pricing. First, cars in poor condition, or which need much work to make them respectable, are still worth relatively little, and most of these are the pre-facelift cars, which are generally less sought after anyway. For example, on the Classic Cars for Sale website, Castle Classic Cars in East Sussex was offering a 1985, pre-facelift 500SEC "for recommissioning", while on the same page a private seller in Italy hoped for €50,000 (about £43,000) for what looked a good 1991 car.

Second, the 560SEC has sucked out some of the value of the 500SEC (and 380/420SEC). "People who've got collections want a low mileage 560SEC and will pay £50,000 to £60,000 for a 30,000-mile car in the right colour," explains Buckingham classic Mercedes specialist Edward Hall. "But a comparable 500SEC would be around £40,000."

Edward was asking £16,995 for a 1988 500SEC with 144,200 miles, and which he described as good but not perfect, and the £15,000 to £20,000 bracket does appear to be the realistic hunting ground for a car that will provide enjoyment but not concours prizes. A £10,000 to £15,000 spend involves more rust and other problems, while dropping below £10,000 gets you only a 'project' – and the trouble with projects is that the scarcity of trim and mechanical parts makes restoration very difficult. ▷

500SEC Inside and out



Specialist overview

Steve Shali, Klasse of Fulham in south west London

"These cars are at the age when they need things replacing due to wear and tear, so some replacements are almost certainly in the pipeline. The M117 V8s are tough and long lasting, but could be in need of items such as new timing chains and engine mounts. There are many hidden rust traps, all well known to Mercedes specialists."

Powertrain

● The priciest under-bonnet problem is likely to be electrical, in the form of a failed transistor pack, which is located on the left inner wing. You won't get any warning, it'll just fail and the car won't start, and it's a £800 replacement.

● If the automatic gearbox 'flares' between gears - in other words, revs momentarily rise - then a gearbox rebuild is on the cards. Another sign of trouble is the loss of reverse gear. The best repair route is to have the gearbox sent off to a transmission specialist.

● If there's vibration through the steering on full lock, this probably means the hydraulic engine mounts are worn out and need replacing.

● The exhaust can be replaced in sections, but the original system lasts a very long time, so when you try to replace one part you may find the sections have all fused together and a complete system is needed.





The five-litre V8 is highly flexible and makes a lovely deep sound.

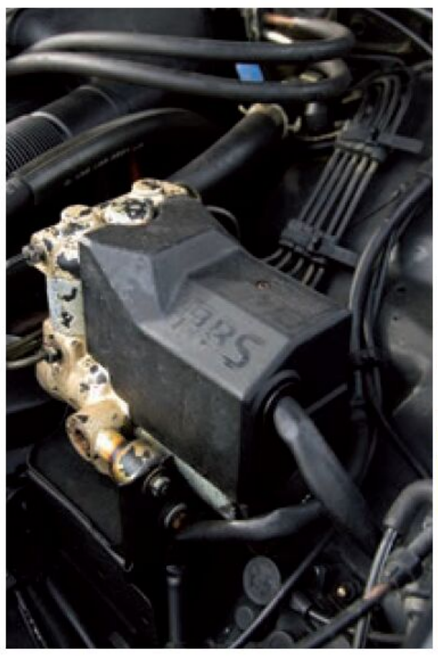
Suspension, steering and braking system

● The most common front suspension failing is wear on the lower front ball joints, so listen out for creaking. If the car has the rear self-levelling system, check it works - it's a reliable system but look out for leaks from the rear shock absorbers and an uneven ride height.

● SECs are at the age where the steering box can expire, leaking its fluid, and this is quite common. It's best to have the box sent off for specialist attention.

● Brake calipers, now with decades of muck and rust, can be expected to stick, at which point they must be replaced. Check also for corroded brake pipes.

● Listen and feel for some 'kickback' from the brake pedal due to the anti-lock braking sensors at the front wheels activating the system prematurely. These sensors should be replaced in pairs.





The C126 is 4.9m long; ABS fitted as standard from December 1984.

Spotted for sale

USED CAR DEALER 500SEC

1991/J, red, beige leather, 145,000 miles, non-standard wheels, front end respray, £16,000, Birmingham



Rust found under rear parcel shelf; early cars had 14-inch alloys, later ones 15-inchers.



> "The priciest under-bonnet problem is likely to be electrical"

Bodywork and wheels

● You may well see corrosion on the exterior of the body, but this is more likely to be on early, 1981 to 1985 cars. However, there are many hidden rust traps: underneath the rear parcel shelf, in the boot and behind the battery tray in the engine are just three places where you'll find corrosion.

● Also check the state of the front and rear jacking points, found behind plastic covers on the side sill, as this usually gives a good indication of how much rust there is on the bodywork generally.

● Some 500SECs have collected aftermarket bodykits, but unless they're period AMG items these can only detract from the car's value, and may be hard or impossible to remove cleanly.

● Cars with non-standard wheels are quite common. Some, such as those from Lorinser, can have their own period provenance, but the lack of the correct rims can tell a story of other modifications such as stiffened suspension, which few will want.



Interior and electrics

● The standard-fit sunroof is a source of problems. Besides the possibility of the motor failing, it can also cause rusting on the floor, so lift the front footwell carpets and check for damp. The drainage pipes in the sunroof get blocked and then crack, and the water runs down inside the car and collects under the carpet.

● Ensure all the electrical functions work properly, in particular the automatic seat belt feeders. The electric adjustment switches for the front seats (usually the driver's) can fail, although a specialist in SECs may well be able to clean and overhaul it and get it working again.

● If the leather seat trim (or velour) is in poor condition, repair will involve a costly re-trim at a specialist, because few if any interior C126 parts are now available from Mercedes-Benz. The only realistic spares sources are specialist breakers. ▷







500SEC Inside and out

Spotted for sale

CLASSIC CAR DEALER 500SEC

1985/C, blue, beige leather, pre-facelift, mileage unstated, £16,990, Cambridgeshire





Verdict

The C126 will go down in history as one of Stuttgart's post-war gems. It has fabulous looks, and dynamics that even now are not seriously out of date. And while the 500SEC is arguably in the shadow of the 560SEC, it's still a lovely car to drive – some even prefer the 500 for its added engine sweetness over the 560.

But it's essential to spend the right money to search out a car that doesn't need major work doing – and 500SECs of this calibre are now rare. These 126-series Coupes are not economic to restore, and it will take a big hike in their value before they are. In this case, you really can't afford to buy a cheap example, because it will probably only lead to financial heartache.



Typical basic servicing costs

(A/B services including VAT)

Model	Oil Service	Major Service
500SEC	£250	£665

Quotes from Klasse of Fulham

Non-routine servicing costs

- ★ Renew timing chain and tensioner **£3,700**
- ★ Replace failed engine transistor pack **£800**
- ★ Replace both hydraulic engine mounts **£860**
- ★ Fit complete new exhaust system **£3,600**
- ★ Renew front brake discs and pads **£465**
- ★ Four premium brand tyres (205/65ZR15) **£600**

What you'll pay

£5,000-£10,000 Most likely to be a project, with uneconomic and difficult restoration required

£10,000-£15,000 This money buys a running 500SEC that will need a lot of tidying and possibly expensive replacement components

£15,000-£20,000 This is the price range for solid but not perfect 500SECs, and cars will likely have covered well over 100,000 miles

£20,000-£30,000 At this money, cars will usually be at classic dealers. They should be sound but probably with minor rust, perhaps under the rear parcel shelf

£30,000-£40,000 Expect the best quality 500SECs. At this budget, don't accept any corrosion or interior or exterior flaws. For a 500SEC to make over £40,000, it has to be in pristine condition

500SEC vs 560SEC

In the C126 world, the 560SEC introduced at the 1985 facelift is the model collector's chase. But what is the difference between it and the 500SEC? The 560 uses the 500's M117 engine, increased from 4,973cc 5,547cc by means of a longer stroke. On the final, post September 1987 spec, the 560's power is 296bhp and 336lb ft, 13.4 and 12.4 per cent increases over the 500. This results in slightly increased performance, but poorer fuel economy.

On driving the cars back-to-back, you'd notice the smoother nature of the 500's V8, but also the meatier response the 560 V8 musters in the low and mid range. On equipment, the two models are very similar, the 560's additions being standard self-levelling rear suspension, memory front seats and a 'town and country' horn. You might notice the 560's 10mm wider, 215/65 tyres but otherwise the cars look identical inside and out. Apart from, of course, the bootlid badge – and for potential purchasers, the 560SEC tends to be the clincher.

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Staying put

Now into his sixth year of owning the four-cylinder GLC, David Sutherland considers his options and comes to a smart conclusion

WORDS & IMAGES **DAVID SUTHERLAND**

FACTSHEET

CAR 2017 GLC220d AMG Line
OWNER David Sutherland
LOCATION Surrey, UK
PURCHASED September 2017
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT The GLC has sailed through another MOT, and nothing extra was needed at the last service, which came in at £455



△ David's previous Mercedes was a well liked ML320 CDI.

△▷ It could do with a clean, but this four-pot suits the GLC SUV.

September 2023 marks six years since I collected our then brand new Mercedes-Benz GLC220d AMG Line Premium from the dealership at Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey.

It might sound odd, but I didn't really want a new car at the time, as our much-loved ML320 CDI I'd bought at auction suited the needs of both my wife and I. She loved the feeling of security and the excellent view that the high driving position afforded, and I enjoyed that plus the excellent three-litre V6 diesel and the vast boot.

However, it was starting to need pricey repairs, and wasn't compliant with the London ULEZ, the expansion of which had been announced. So when I discovered Mercedes-Benz was offering big discounts on new GLCs including a £2,000 'bonus' on diesel trade-ins, the ML's fate was sealed.

As most new car buyers do, we signed up for 'personal contract purchase', Mercedes' version called Agility, which in simple terms involves making monthly payments over four years, with an option to make a final 'balloon' payment, or trade-in or sell the vehicle and pay that off. When that day arrived, Covid was still raging and this plus other factors had significantly inflated used car values, hence the GLC was valued way above the predicted £18,175 (compared to its 2017 new, discounted price of £35,800), at £24,000 to £25,000 by two different M-B dealers.

Value satisfaction

As we decided to keep the GLC and re-finance it, this extraordinarily high value was academic – but it means that for as long as we own the car, I'll be near obsessed with its value. And as many readers will know, a buy-in value is now instantly available online from a number of companies, WeBuyAnyCar the one I regularly consult.

When we presented the GLC for valuation at the four-year stage, it had covered just 28,000 miles. Shortly after that my wife began commuting two days a week in it, and two years on the mileage is close to 59,000. The most recent figure from the aforementioned website is £21,000 – still over £2,800 more than it was supposed to have been in 2021. And provided you describe your car accurately, the online price is what the company will pay you on the day, so I am told by one person I know who has tried it.

I'm rather pleased that our mid-sized SUV is holding its value better than expected, but of course everything needs context, and that is provided by the present GLC range starting at £57,000. What a price – that's exactly double the price of the first flat in London I bought in 1981!

But, as two years ago, we have no plans to sell the GLC. It's not an exciting car, and from some angles I think it's a little ugly, but it's so capable, especially as a refined motorway cruiser, and 50mpg is possible on a good day. Other than requiring new front suspension arms, and the Eco Start/Stop system working only when it feels like it, nothing has gone wrong in nearly 60,000 miles, which I find impressive. And the final incentive to keep it is that after five years of paying the so-called luxury road tax supplement for five years, the annual amount halved to £255 for year six, as of September 2023. There is simply no need to change the GLC – so we won't!

▽ Swooping centre console; front seats with heating/memory.



Back to black

Following overwhelmingly positive ownership of a 211-series E-Class diesel some years ago, Reed Hitchcock goes in search of another oil burning Benz

WORDS & IMAGES **REED HITCHCOCK**

FACTSHEET

CARS 2006 E320 CDI/2011 E350 4Matic Estate
OWNER Reed Hitchcock
LOCATION Virginia, USA
PURCHASED June 2023/May 2014
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Another E-Class joins the Hitchcock fold, this time a turbodiesel of 211-series vintage - just like Reed owned before



Back in 2009, I bought a 2006 W211 E320 CDI. It was grey with black leather, and apart from a little wear on the B-pillar cladding was a remarkably clean car. I'd long been a diesel fan, but hadn't owned anything newer than a 1987 300SDL at that point. Having had an E320 CDI press car in early 2005, I was instantly smitten with the torquey power delivery coupled with remarkable 40 plus miles per gallon economy. Besides, the thing was outright quick. I even got to ride along as 300SEL 6.3 guru Erich Waxenberger put that car through its paces – his way!

The E320 CDI's OM648 was the last of Mercedes' iron block, straight-six oil burners, and was available here in the States for only two years – 2005 to 2006 – and only in a Saloon body. It was the best of both worlds: durable, reliable architecture capable of moonshot miles coupled with modern diesel tech like common-rail direct injection and four valves per cylinder. I never should have sold that car.

Fast forward to 2023, and my daily driver is a full-sized pickup delivering about 13.5mpg. While it comes in very handy for country living, it isn't super practical for road trips or even just bombing around town. I'd recently been toying with the idea of getting another diesel, but having been bit by the 2013 W212 E350 Bluetec diesel I'd owned more recently, I decided to find another W211 E320 CDI, which is easier said than done.

> **"My wife and I decided we'd make a vacation out of buying a car remotely"**

The search begins

I was able to find some decent cars, but none within about 500 miles of home. So my wife and I decided we would roll the dice and make a little vacation out of buying a car remotely, picking it up, and driving it home. After filtering through the candidates, we settled on a black on black, 2006 with 173,000 well-documented miles. All of the right work had been done with the receipts to prove it. It was located just outside of Bentonville, Arkansas, the home of Walmart – a hair over 1,300 miles from home.

Apart from a small recharge of the air conditioning, the car performed flawlessly for the entire trip meandering through Memphis, Tennessee, Tupelo, Mississippi, Huntsville, Alabama, Asheville, North Carolina, and finally home over the course of five days and averaging a not-too-shabby 38.1mpg. Man, I've missed having a diesel, and it's nice to have an around-town car that doesn't require its own oil refinery!

△ **Reed's new E320 CDI performed well on the 1,300-mile trip home.**

▽ **En route home from picking up the E-Class in Bentonville, AR.**

▽▽ **3,222cc straight-six diesel provides a useful 369lb ft torque.**





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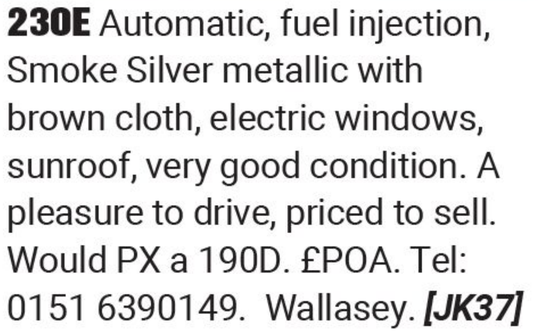
300SL 1988, Diamond Blue with grey leather interior, 140,000 miles with Mercedes-Benz service history up to 94,000 miles, MOT, heated seats, Blaupunkt radio. Always been garaged, completely resprayed over 10 years ago and only 500 miles since. Owned for 19 years. £16,500 OVNO. Tel: 07497 700972. Bath. ***[JK36]***



230E Automatic, fuel injection, Smoke Silver metallic with brown cloth, electric windows, sunroof, very good condition. A pleasure to drive, priced to sell. Would PX a 190D. £POA. Tel: 0151 6390149. Wallasey. ***[JK37]***



SL320 2000, 57,800 miles, full service history. Fastidiously maintained condition, full mechanical appraisal on SLShop website. £19,500 ono. Tel: 01746 783878. South Staffs. ***[JK35]***



500SL 1986, silver, blue leather, 116,000 miles. Recent factory hood. Long term lady owner. MOT July 2024. Drives superbly. £26,500. Tel: 01904 700 277 or 07968 056464. York. ***[JK34]***



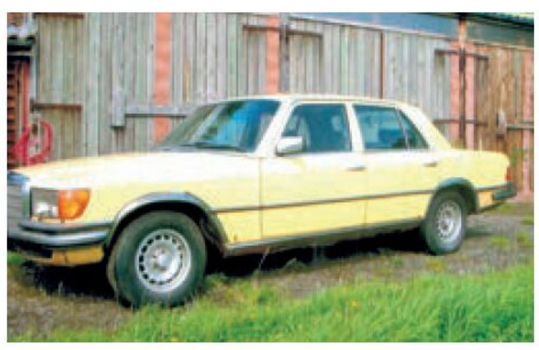
350SLC 1972 fully restored in 2014 for Drew Pritchard, repainted, all welding done, gearbox rebuilt three years ago, leather trim, steering box overhauled, £15,955. Tel: 07503 739538. West London. ***[JK31]***



CLK230 K Cabriolet Evolution 2.3-litre, red top, supercharged engine, 99,347 genuine miles, 12 month's MOT, one previous lady owner, in very good overall condition. Everything works as it should. Drives and looks great. More pics available call or Whatsapp. Tel: 07785 712087. Crosby. ***[JK28]***



350SL 1976, rare colour Mercedes, black textile trim, needs paintwork, 95,000 miles, many invoices, fully recommissioned, automatic, personal plate, tax and MOT exempt, ULEZ exempt, £1,395. Tel: 07503 739538. West London. ***[JK32]***



450SE 1978 automatic, yellow, brown leather, 112,000 miles, full Mercedes service history, ESR, alloys and much more. Some body corrosion but a worthwhile restoration. Not run in 15 years. £3,750. Tel: 01904 700277 or 07968 056464. York. ***[JK33]***



380SL 1985, Smoke Silver with 76,622 miles. Factory hardtop with convertible top tucked inside. I have owned the car for 25 years. Reason for sale is I'm getting too old. No MOT but in running order, needs some TLC to bodywork. Good refurb project. £8,000 no offers. Tel: 01822 841757. Tavistock, Devon. ***[JK27]***



SL350 with full service history, absolutely stunning, 79,800 miles, full set of spare wheels with winter tyres included, £8,000. Tel: 07427 161268. Barnstaple. ***[JK3]***



300SL-24 1993, black/tan, two owners, full Mercedes-Benz service history, 99,000 miles, new discs/pads always garaged, cost new £69,575, 14,000 miles in last 20 years, MOT March 2024. £8,000. Tel: 01371 876647. Essex. ***[JK25]***



450SL 1980, 89,000 miles. Historic car, ULEZ compliant. Silver blue, tan leather interior, hardtop and dark brown soft top. Well cared for and maintained for last 23 years. FSH and MOTs. Runs beautifully. Always garaged. £29,500 Tel: 07864 712297. Orpington, London Borough of Bromley. ***[JK23]***



S320 CDI L 2009, LWB, luxury saloon with only 79,000 miles, silver, grey leather, all S-Class refinements with fully adjustable rears seats. One previous owner, full M-B main dealer service history, all invoices and current MOT. This car has always been garaged with little winter use and is now surplus to my requirements. Please call for further details. £9,750 OVNO. Tel: 07836 232969. email: mbdneg@gmail.com. ***[JK20]***

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190E 2.6 1990, in need of respray and minor body work. AMG bodykit, split alloys, sunroof. Broken front screen and O/S front drop glass, but otherwise intact and drives well. Nice engine gearbox not too far off, nice project. Tel: 07950 872537. ***[JK26]***



C-Class Elegance An original example of Mercedes W202. Only two owners from new, cared for by current lady owner for last 23 years. Full service history, under 100,000 miles on the clock. Viewings and sensible offers welcome. £2,000. Tel: 07588 484630. Portsmouth. ***[JK22]***



E320 Cabriolet Sportline 1996, P reg, automatic, Tourmaline Green, black leather, black soft top. 142,000 miles, MOT till 2024, service history. Full Sportline spec, air con, cruise etc. One of the last registered 1996 cars. Needs cosmetic TLC, offers on £10,700. Tel: 07956 995556. Pinner, Middlesex. ***[JK21]***



190E 1990, automatic, petrol, three keys, replaced front calipers, pads, rear springs, shocks, starter. Faults rear electric windows, offside door outer handle, door card tops, driver's seat. Paint good but lacquer peeling and pitted. £2,550. Tel: 07712 638766. Worthing. ***[JK1]***



300SE 1986, W126 frame, Petrol blue, sunroof, automatic, five-seater saloon. With present owner for 30 years. 166,000 miles now and MOT until December 2023. Full history receipts, and £3,000 spent on the superstructure recently. Health condition denies me the energy to complete an update. This vehicle needs a new owner to complete the task. £2,000 ono. Tel: 0208 789 5466 or 07940 019857. ***[JK6]***



C215 CL55 AMG 2002, low mileage 78,000, FSR, MOT Nov 2023, automatic, fully loaded, double glazed, heated/cooled seats, bi-xenon headlights, keyless entry/ignition, etc. First to see will buy, loss of storage forces sale, £9,500. Tel: 07584 020272. Whyteleafe, Surrey ***[JK4]***



A180 CDI AMG 2015, Night edition**,** covered 31,000 miles from new with service history. Finished in metallic Cosmos Black with contrasting black Anthracite leather/microfibre interior. This Mercedes has all the usual luxurious refinements and is a stunning example of this model. Exceptional quality and it drives without fault. Must be one of the best examples of this model. Will come with 12 months MOT and warranty. Please feel free to ask for any more information. £POA. Tel: 07779 335737. Burton on Trent. ***[JK10]***



SLK200 spares or repair in Linarite blue, 2000, failed MOT (rear suspension mounts corroded), 113,000 miles, upper bodywork good, engine/transmission good, vario-roof all working, no warning lights on dash, car in South Yorks. Buyer to collect £500 or best offer. Tel: 07970 864242. Doncaster. ***[JK2]***



C140 CL600 V12 coupe, 1998, 90,000 miles, silver metallic, refurbished two-tone blue-grey nappa leather, refurbished alloys, fully loaded spec, FSH, immaculate inside and out, drives perfectly, MOT to Aug 2024. Price reduced to £17,500 ono. Tel: 07714 471014. Dorking, Surrey. ***[JK11]***



E220 Coupe 1994, 114,000 miles, red, FSH, refurbished alloys, refurbished cream leather with red piping, new front/rear windscreens, new tyres, immaculate inside and out, MOT to Mar 2024, last serviced Feb 2023, Price reduced to £6,000 ono. Tel 07714 471014. Dorking, Surrey. ***[JK12]***

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E350 CDI Coupe V6, 2012, less than 42,000 miles on the clock with FSH, and fully updated Mercedes-Benz virtual logbook. The car has been maintained via both Mercedes-Benz main dealers and specialists. Low-mileage coupe is finished in metallic black with a light grey leather interior with Apple CarPlay upgrade. £13,000 ono. Tel: 07872 594487. Ilkey. ***[JK8]***



W116 450SE 1979, 95,000 miles, auto, metallic magnetite blue, bamboo leather interior, air con, excellent chrome, M-B splashguards, owner's wallet, histories, spare wheel, tools, jack, M-B first aid kit, fire extinguisher, £POA. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk ***[EFW1]***



W123 280CE 1983, 80,000 miles, auto, flat Sahara beige, olive cloth interior, ESR, air con, excellent chrome, M-B splashguards, spare wheel, tools, triangle, MB first aid kit, history, £POA. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk ***[EFW2]***

E220 Cabriolet 1995, fabulous**,** refined car in great condition and drives perfectly. Always garaged and regularly maintained throughout its life with an extensive documented service history. The car has just passed its MOT with no advisories and benefits from virtually new Goodyear tyres, as well as refurbed alloys. Only four previous owners. Happy to answer any questions or arrange a viewing. Next MOT due May 19 2024, 15-hole alloy wheels. Tel: 07902 433000. North London. ***[JK]***



C126 500SEC, 99,000 miles, Arctic White, black leather interior, ESR, air con, AMG monobloc alloys on Pirelli P Zero tyres, bills, history, tools, jack, triangle, M-B first aid kit, £POA. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk ***[EFW3]***



380SLC 1980, 86,000 miles, petrol blue with cream velour interior, very good condition throughout, drives very well, three owners and full history since new, tax free and ULEZ exempt, a real head-turner, £22,000. Tel: 07721 746433. Kent ***[EFW7]***



180 Ponton 1954, petrol saloon, I have no time to complete this easy project, some re-chroming and bead blasting has been done, it is now ready for someone to complete the project, £8,000 ONO. Tel: 07877 198628. Bedhampton ***[EFW11]***



CLK55 AMG Cabriolet 61,000 miles, metallic black, pristine light grey (rather than usual black) nappa leather, two keys, M-B Club member, very good history – nine stamps, last serviced by specialist October 2022 (£1,250 spent), dry stored in winter, very good Michelin Pilot Sport tyres, £11,450 ONO. Tel: 07770 765554. Gerrards Cross ***[EFW15]***



W124 200E Avantgarde 1990, metallic silver blue, auto, spares or repair, £POA. Tel: 07413 064712. Suffolk ***[EFW4]***



E200 BlueEfficiency Avantgarde 2010, 60,000 miles, four-door, auto, reg with private plate, full M-B service history, metallic grey, full black leather seats, sat nav, two keys, two owners, well maintained with documentation, just been serviced, gorgeous condition, £7,000 ONO. Tel: 07805 933528. Essex ***[EFW8]***



CLS350 CDI Grand Edition Four-door, two owners from new (one being the dealer as ex-demo) same owner since 2010, FSH with all receipts, excellent condition for the year, one-year MOT, two keys, £6,450. Tel: 07768 511243. Milton Keynes ***[EFW12]***



C43 AMG Estate 2000, 150,000 miles, one-year MOT, full history folder up to date including original bill of sale, all the toys you would expect from an AMG of this year, very recent full service (including spark plugs), gearbox service by John Haynes, lots of money spent this year, this very rare car is very clean inside and out and drives very well, comes with two keys, £8,995 ONO. Tel: 07710 414854. Worthing ***[EFW19]***



W201 190E 1990, Arctic White, auto, very good blue block cloth interior, ESR, spare wheel, M-B splashguards, tools, hack, triangle, first aid kit, bills and history, £POA. Tel: 07413 064732. Suffolk ***[EFW5]***



W202 C280 Sport 1998, 75,000 miles, in excellent condition throughout, only three previous owners, brilliant silver with black leather interior, M112 V6 (197bhp), full AMG bodykit, exhaust, electric seats, Goodyear Eagle 1 Tyres, full respray November 2022, good SH, all paperwork available, £POA. Tel: 07745 623664. Tring ***[EFW9]***



E320 Cabriolet Sportline 158,000 miles, rare, metallic bornite, light brown leather interior, five-speed auto, FSH with plenty of bills, sold with 12 months MOT, drives beautifully, competitively priced, £9,750. Tel: 07565 006735. Cambridge ***[EFW17]***



W123 230E 1981, 120,000 miles, metallic silver blue, four-speed manual, good blue cloth interior, air con, MB alloys, service history, spare wheel, tools, jack, triangle, first aid kit, £POA. Tel: 07413 064732. Suffolk ***[EFW6]***



CLK270 CDI Coupe, 38,000 miles, M-B owners club member, drives superbly, £650 spent in January in gearbox full service and conductor plate, private plate, Sony apple car play stereo, last MOT no advisories, MOT history online, any inspection welcome, some history, rear seats unused, two keys, £POA. Tel: 07855 861825. Glasgow ***[EFW20]***

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C123 300CD Coupe 1984, 84,000 miles, (not California import), bamboo leather interior, 2,996cc diesel engine, five-speed manual, stripped for spraying, all welding complete, £POA. Tel: 07413 064732. Suffolk ***[EF]***

MERC TRADER



SL350 2004, 55,950 miles, 3.7 litres, rare Firemist Red metallic (C548) with cream leather interior, glass panoramic roof, in my ownership since September 2017 and has a full service history for that time, additionally it has upgraded Brembo discs and pads, new coil springs, fully refurbished 18-inch AMG diamond cut wheels, as new tyres, private plate and a tailored cover included, MOT to September 2023, much admired and regularly shown, £9,950 ONO. Tel: 07739 737889. Cardiff ***[EFW22]***



SL280 1995, petrol, automatic, grey leather interior, drives beautifully, navy blue soft top and matching hardtop, excellent condition all round with great service history, no expense spared maintaining this fabulous future classic, £9,950. Tel: 07973 344201. West Midlands ***[EFW21]***



SL500 AMG 2003, silver with red interior, MOT until March 2024, in excellent condition and has had 'B' service 1500 miles ago at Mercedes independent garage, lovely looking car in exceptional condition, £9,750 ONO. Tel: 07710 459055. Chester ***[EFW26]***



CL63 AMG Biturbo 65,000 miles, pearlescent white with black leather, factory carbon fibre exterior and interior trim, too many extras to list, reluctant sale due to house purchase, £25,500. Tel: 07789 513517. Surrey ***[EFW23]***



V124 260E long-wheelbase 57,450 miles, auto, silver, grey interior, very clean, private plate, ultra smooth, quiet engine and gearbox, good oil pressure, very good condition all round, service records, owned 10 years, six-door limousine, seats eight, £POA. Tel: 07982 825394. Tyne and Wear ***[EFW24]***



C43 AMG 2001, 100,000 miles, one of the last ones produced, FSH and will have fresh MOT, always garaged, absolutely no rust and never modified or damaged, more pictures can be supplied upon interest, £10,000 ONO. Tel: 07989 888880. New Romney ***[EFW25]***



SLK Kompressor 1999, four excellent tyres, serviced during my five-year ownership by John Haynes, blue/black leather interior, Bluetooth CD radio with USB, M-B and Sadcase member, new oil/filter, 12-month MOT valid until July 2024, all extras still with car, £2,950. Tel: 01403 710029 / 07730437219. Horsham ***[EFW27]***



W109 300SEL 1969, 106,000 miles, 6.3, LHD, auto, blue metallic 387, mechanically excellent, no rust or rot anywhere, drives superbly, ivory leather, interior and carpets, FSH, only one previous owner, £30,000 ONO. Tel: 07818 471980. Canterbury ***[EFW28]***



V220 S320 CDI L 2004, 141,000 miles, long-wheelbase model, fully loaded, electric heated seats front and rear, mirrors, windows, sunroof, cruise, park assist, air suspension, FSR, MOT March 2024, unmarked interior and paintwork, top of the range model, beautiful drive, 4 x recent tyres, spare unused, well looked after, £2,250. Tel 0208 660 4538 / 07584 020272. Surrey ***[EFW30]***

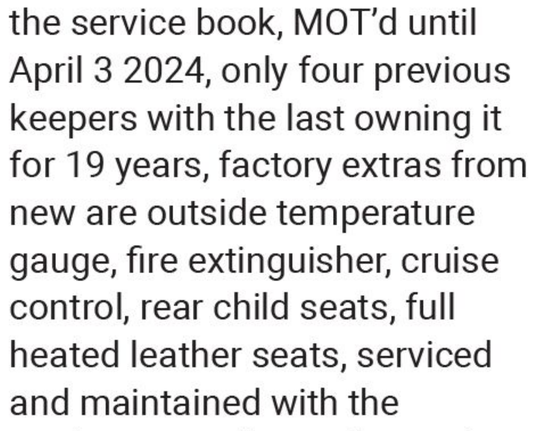


CLK220 CDI AMG, 111,000 miles, sports, auto, exceptional vehicle, extras include Nubuck black leather heated seats, paddle gearshifts, climate/cruise control, new tyres all round, discs and pads, £1,000 service, special car, MOT Feb 2024, £2,850. Tel: 07389 718333. Bognor Regis ***[EFW31]***

300D 1980, 120,000 miles, in Ascot Grey, auto, almost completely stripped for painting, good charcoal cloth interior, unmolested, solid, no welding needed, abandoned resto, ill health forces sale, £POA. Tel: 07413 064712. Suffolk ***[EF]***



500SL 1987, 52,217 miles, auto, finished in arctic white with unmarked hard and soft tops, full grey heated unmarked leather seats, also rear seats fitted as an extra, 11 stamps in the service book, MOT'd until April 3 2024, only four previous keepers with the last owning it for 19 years, factory extras from new are outside temperature gauge, fire extinguisher, cruise control, rear child seats, full heated leather seats, serviced and maintained with the SLShop regardless of cost, this is an extremely rare low mileage 500SL in absolutely stunning condition and drives like the day it was new, been in a dry, heated garage for the last 20 years, £49,995. Tel: 07814 848932. Bridgend ***[EFW33]***



E55 AMG 1999, 174,000 miles, saloon, silver body, silver and black leather, owned by us for 12 years, FSH, new rear blind, EM, air con, reluctantly selling due to lack of use, book pack with two keys and £6,000 of receipts, bodywork needs attention, usual rear arches and inner front wings, £4,250. Tel: 07968 430044. Cheltenham ***[EFW32]***



S210 E430 Estate 2000, facelift model, extremely well preserved, she is by far one of the cleanest S210s I have ever seen, the car has been well looked after with all receipts including original sales receipt, £6,000. Tel: 07859 974141. Penkridge ***[DEW4]***



CLK320 Cabriolet Avantgarde 2001, beautiful, rust free, two-tone blue and grey interior with refurbished 18-inch AMG monoblock alloys with Avon tyres, watertight roof, just serviced with new front discs and pads, spark plugs and leads, £3,500. Tel: 07769 738621. Hertfordshire ***[EFW34]***



CLK230 Kompressor Avantgarde 2002, Tiptronic, silver, only two owners in 20 years, FSH, Merc specialist last 10 years, MOT March 2024, no advisories, AMG alloys, two-tone leather, potential classic, sensible price, £1,350. Tel: 07710 198665. Halifax ***[EFW16]***



280SL 26,500 miles, soft top, currently owned and always garaged for last 13 years, excellent condition and genuine, comes with hardtop, inspections welcome, £12,000 ONO. Tel: 07831 833389. Staffordshire ***[DEW14]***



Mercedes replica Fully rebuilt, new running gear, new brakes and lines, new hood, on the button, ready to go, UK plates but located in Dublin, £POA. Tel: 0035 3868 276666. County Meath ***[CDW12]***



W109 300SEL 6.3 1969, 106,000 miles, LHD, auto, blue metallic, mechanically excellent, no rust or rot anywhere, drives superbly, ivory leather, interior and carpets, FSH, only one previous owner, £40,000. Tel: 07818 471980. Canterbury ***[DEW1]***



SLK230 Kompressor 1999, four excellent continental tyres, engine and auto gearbox oil and filters renewed, two-tone blue-black leather interior, heated seats and door mirrors, DAB CD/radio with USB and Bluetooth, M-B owners club and SadCase member for the past four years of ownership, part service history with John Haynes, MOT until July 2023, beautiful fast drive, includes mesh wind break, first aid kit, warning triangle, space saver tyre and electric compressor, £2,995. Tel: 07730 437219. West Sussex ***[CDW1]***



R129 280SL 1995, 110,000 miles, three former owners, Nautic Blue with mushroom leather, MOT August, very well-maintained example, hardtop stand and bespoke dust cover included, not being used as often as it should and space required for new vehicle, £12,500 ONO. Tel: 0131 557 9246. Edinburgh ***[DEW12]***



SL60 AMG 1998, 24,800 miles, very rare RHD, second owner, complete history, £POA. Tel: 0049 173 951 4613. Germany ***[CM41-21]***



280SL 1985, 143,380 miles, auto, I have owned this wonderful car for 20 years and has been remarkably trouble free, age is now catching up, hence sale, always garaged, black leather with walnut dash, hardtop and wind deflector, new mohair soft top 4 years ago, regular servicing, MOT Feb 2024, pioneer radio/cassette, £26,250. Tel: 07834 708255. Devon ***[DEW2]***



W202 C200 AMG 2000, 128,000 miles, one owner, grey leather seats and interior all in excellent condition, bodywork very good, full servicing records held, MOT until March 2023, all in good running order, viewing available at any time, £3,250. Tel: 07974 381315. Monmouthshire ***[FGW2]***

INTERNATIONAL MERCEDES



E420 1996, 51,400 miles, five-speed automatic, owned since new, very good condition, black leather interior, sunroof, always garaged. $7,000. Tel 001 57 3106882580. Florida, USA. ***[JK24]***



CLS500 2005, 54,000 miles, 05G500 registration, black with cream leather interior, very good condition, NCT tested until March 2024, £POA. Tel: 0035 38724 54893. Maynooth, ROI ***[EFW10]***



560SL 1989, 96,500 miles, PS, PB, electric windows and door locks, 2 USB ports, new soft top, hardtop, very good condition, all new carpeting, $30,000. Tel: +1 1714 299 9264. California ***[EFW1]***



300SE 1965, automatic, RHD, in two-tone maroon and white top with a beautiful beige interior and wooden dashboard to compliment the ride, car starts and runs, air suspension in running condition, minimal rust, car can be shipped to the UK, £85,000 ONO. Tel: +65 8118 4948. Singapore ***[EFW3]***



R107 420SL 1987, in immaculate concourse condition, except for serviceable parts it is as it left the dealers showroom, has won numerous concours events, this car must be seen to be appreciated, £49,950. Tel: 07770 784690. Leeds ***[DEW5]***

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PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES



LED headlamps for E-Class Pair for 212-series model (removed from 2014 car). Part numbers A 212 826 11 91 and A 212 826 12 92. £POA. Tel: 07879 697475. Stirling. ***[JK5]***



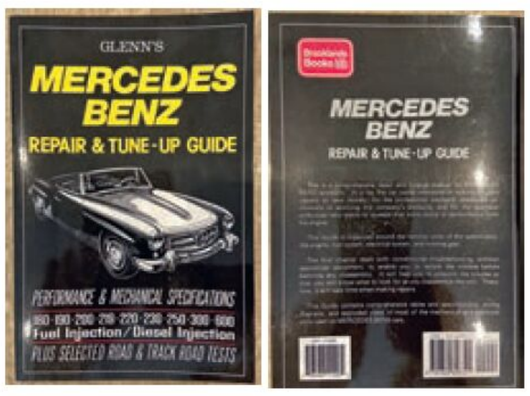
SL63 AMG aluminium spare wheel With collapsible tyre, in VGC, (fits most SL to 2019 with 19-/20-inch wheels) only used for trial fitment to vehicle. Part No A230 401 27 02, size is 6.5 X 19 H2 ET14 wheel, tyre is 175/50-19 97P, car has been sold. £375 ono. Tel: 07470 683479. Norfolk. ***[JK7]***



AMG alloys 17-inch, staggered, fully refurbished with diamond cut lips. Come with new centre caps, in stunning condition and would be ideal for upgrade. The front are 7.1/2×17 and the rears are 8.1/2×17. Please note buyer collects, £970. Tel: 07879 215057. West Bromwich, West Midlands. ***[JK9]***



Bosch windshield wipers In stainless steel, new and unused for 1960 Mercedes Fintail. £25. Tel: 07899 830420. SW London. ***[JK13]***



Benz repair and tune-up Guide book Brand new. £15. Tel: 07899 830420. SW London. ***[JK14/15]***



Mercedes-Benz catalogue For 220 SB, 1960, original. £20. Tel: 07899 830420. SW London. ***[JK16]***



Window winder For 1960 Mercedes Fintail, original. £5. Tel: 07899 830420. SW London. ***[JK17]***

Mexican hat alloy wheels Restored, x4, 6Jx14H2, £500. Tel: 01883 348187. Surrey. ***[JK]***

W123 door mirror Good condition, £70. Tel: 01883 348187. Surrey. ***[JK]***

W123 electric motor for door mirror New old stock, part No 1238202542, £100. Tel: 01883 348187. Surrey. ***[JK]***



Original wheel trim For Mercedes Fintail 1960, used. £15. Tel: 07899 830420. SW London. ***[JK18]***



Original 220S badge Broken but can be glued on. £5. Tel: 07899 830420. SW London. ***[JK19]***



SL-Class Roadster sales book Hardback, dated 02/2002, 61 unmarked pages, excellent condition, £12.95. Tel: 07399 359072.Canterbury. ***[JK29]***



Mercedes-Benz alloy wheels and tyres Complete set, two front wheels are of size 8.5Jx20H2 ET40, fitted with Hankook Winter I*Cept Evo 2 M+S tyres 245/40 R20 99W XL, two rear wheels are of size 9.5Jx20H2 ET50, fitted with Hankook Winter I*Cept Evo 2 M+S tyres 275/35R20 102W XL, £1,600. Tel: 07882 009846. Colchester ***[EFW16]***

Stainless wheel trims As new, x4, suit 123/107 etc. £150. Tel: 01883 348187. Surrey. ***[JK]***

NO. PLATES



R4 PMG My lovely old Mercedes isn't for sale merely the registration plate. I was given a quote for it two years ago, but willing to accept less, perhaps £800 ONO. Tel: 01296 436814. Aylesbury. ***[JK30]***



126 MPH Personal plate, purchased for a Pagoda in 1971 and used on many cars since. Looks good and has no legal problems (gapping). On retention certificate. £POA. Tel: 0208 366 4639. Middlesex. ***[JK]***



JM8 414 Private plate for sale, £4,200 ono. Tel: 07760 404032. Middlesex. ***[JK]***



190 COS Personal plate, currently has certificate of entitlement. Ready to transfer, open to offers. £POA Tel: 07999 993268 Email: kyingcheng@yahoo.com. Newcastle upon Tyne. ***[JK]***



CG02 AMG Registration currently on retention. Any reasonable offer will be considered. Tel: 07586 322031. Ferndown. ***[JK]***



F1 SLC Registration number and plate. Quick sale £7,500. Tel: 07468 907131. Portsmouth. ***[JK]***

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CLK320 Cabrio

Values of 208-series CLK Cabriolets can't get much lower, however this 320 V6 model proves there's still much to admire

WORDS **MATT ZOLLO** IMAGES **CRAIG PUSEY**

When talking about a car that is worth less than a tenth of its original value, the road testing game changes dramatically. You cannot expect a car to be flawless after more than 100,000 miles, years of advancement in technology and a handful of not-so-careful-owners. Instead, the car's ability to fill a certain role in the context of how much it costs and what else you can get for the money become key for evaluation.

And by these criteria the 208-series Mercedes-Benz CLK320 Cabriolet – not a car that was hugely well regarded when it was new – is a very, very good car indeed. Around £3,000 for a convertible from a premium maker? That in itself is good enough for a lot of people. But even if you are less easily swayed, there are plenty more reasons to recommend it.

It is comfortable and refined, and easy to drive yet reasonably quick. It looks nice with respectably contemporary lines, and has all the toys that a lot of people would say are all you need. It seats four easily, and mechanical integrity means years of hassle-free service are likely.

Just £2,995 gets you this 2000/W plate CLK320 Cabriolet Elegance with 116,000 miles on the clock and six previous owners. It's also got an

"Just £2,995 gets you this 2000/W plate example with 116,000 miles on the clock"

automatic gearbox, an electric roof, electric memory seats, climate control air conditioning, a multi-function steering wheel, an on-board computer and, as you would hope, electric windows and mirrors. Most appealingly of all, though, you get a 3.2-litre V6 with 215bhp and a roof that disappears at the (protracted) touch of a button.

That engine really is lovely. It sounds great and goes as quickly as you would want, feeling suitably big-capacity-brawny at low revs yet happy to hold onto higher ones. The CLK rides nicely on its small wheels and that suits it perfectly. Function over form is the order of the day in this instance and, therefore, of the three trim levels available (Sport, Avantgarde and Elegance), the latter with its softer suspension and smaller wheels comes most recommended.

△ **Elegance-spec Cabriolet wore its 116,00 miles well and seemed a fantastic bargain.**

▽ **3.2-litre V6 makes 215bhp and will send this four-seat drophead to 62mph in 8.3sec.**

▽▽ **Two-tone grey leather interior with air conditioning; five-speed auto as standard.**

Testing roads send a judder through the body, and the CLK does not feel all that well tied down, however. The recirculating ball power steering? Well, it does the job. But these are things for new car road testers to grumble about. At this car's value, it is about as capable and refined an open top cruiser as you are going to get, and that is all that matters. And the CLK does not feel too big or cumbersome, which is admirable considering we are talking about a luxury, four-seat convertible here.

Unless your prospective purchase happens to be a real bargain, more than a few spots of rust mean it's not worth the hassle, as there are plenty of 208-series CLK Cabrios available. Of the 115,161 made, most were V6 320s, which should mean – unless there has been some freak activity within the CLK marketplace – they are the most common version now.





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