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Mercedes ENTHUSIAST

Issue 249
Oct/Nov 2024

MECHATRONIK

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

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"Home to 1.4 billion people, of which 6.1 million are classed as millionaires, China is a key market for Mercedes"

How much is too much? That's the question facing Mercedes as it looks to scale back production of the S-Class, including Maybach variants and electric EQS, following a weakening of demand, most notably in China. Home to 1.4 billion people, of which 6.1 million are classed as millionaires, China has been a key market for Mercedes-Benz for at least two decades. In 2023, customers in that country purchased 737,200 Mercedes vehicles – more than those in continental Europe (659,400) and North America (339,500). Indeed, just two years ago, Chinese customers alone were buying around 1,100 Maybach vehicles *per month*!

However, the winds of change are reshaping the automotive landscape and market conditions have forced Mercedes to cut production of its S-Class, now taking place during a single shift – rather than two – at the future-ready Factory 56 in Sindelfingen. Reports suggest Mercedes is applying more resources than usual to enhance the facelifted version of its luxury saloon, so it'll be interesting to see what it comes up with. In 2022, Mercedes sold over 90,000 S-Classes. With 2024 off to a slow start (16,900 S-Classes have been sold up to the end of Q2), the legendary saloon needs all the help it can get.

In other news, *Mercedes Enthusiast* has a new owner. Kelsey Media struck a deal with Sundial Magazines in July 2024 and now has full control of the publication.

Kyle Molyneux
Editor

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

Ian Kuah
"Around the turn of the century, two very different cars representing the opposite ends of the Mercedes spectrum were delivered to their owners," explains Ian Kuah. "The 518bhp SL73 AMG was the most exclusive pre-merger AMG roadster on offer, while the armoured Brabus S500 Guard B4 was designed to protect and cosset its occupants in luxury. "Read about these incredible creations on pages 20 and 36 of this issue respectively.

Wilhelm Lutjeharms
Our South African contributor Wilhelm Lutjeharms has been following the restoration of a rare, ex-UK 220S Ponton Cabriolet in right-hand-drive, and his patience paid off with a glorious sunset drive. "Having watched this classic cabriolet slowly come together, I was itching to get behind the wheel for its maiden drive along one of South Africa's best coastal roads," he says. Read the full story on page 50.

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70

28

Cover story
20

50

58

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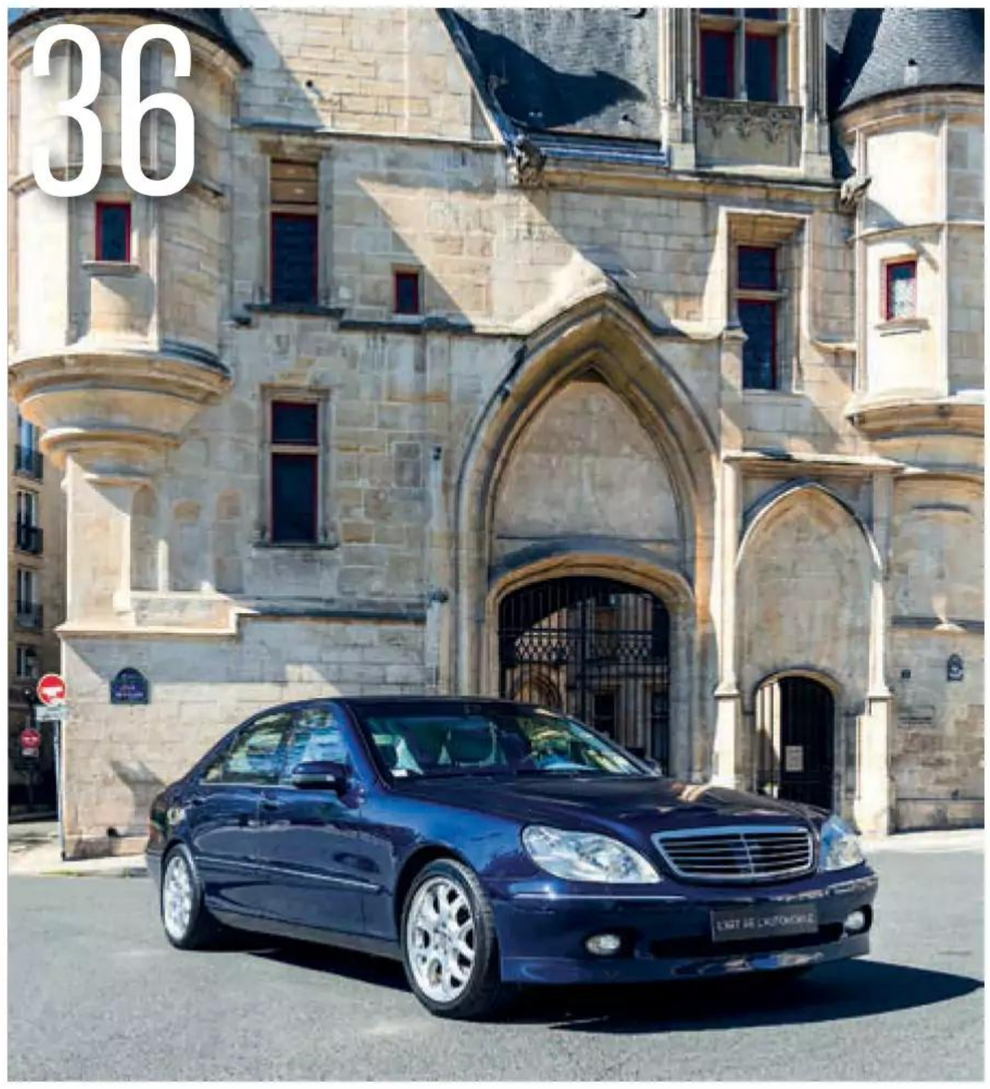


Contents

October/November 2024

UPFRONT

6 **News** Round-up of the hottest Mercedes stories
9 **Talking Point** Would you consider buying a barn find?
10 **Star Shot** Two pages dedicated to a special image
12 **Past Master** Measuring the impact of the R230 SL
14 **Star Talk** The demise of the Benz coupe and cabriolet
16 **Merc Man** Experiencing a Mercedes for the first time
18 **Social Club** Eye-catching cars from around the world

FEATURES

COVER STORY
20 **'bahn stormer** Highly regarded Mercedes restorer Mechatronik revives a super rare SL73 AMG Roadster
28 **Twins** Why own a single Petrol Green Mercedes with a six-figure mileage when you can purchase two instead?
36 **Changing of the Guard** We track down a bulletproof 220-series S500 Guard with exclusive Brabus modifications
44 **Lost and found** Read the spellbinding tale of this 540K Aktion P (Panzer) saloon retrieved from Estonia
50 **Built to cruise** We take a recently restored 220S Ponton Cabriolet for a drive through the South African countryside
58 **Opposites attract** Two very different options for those in the market for an estate – a CLS250 CDI and E63 AMG V8!
64 **Take two** Our UK drive verdict on AMG's pumped up new GT63 4Matic+ Coupe with fire-breathing V8 biturbo engine
70 **Market spotlight** Historics Auctioneers provides exclusive analysis of the current classic car market – don't miss it!

THE BACK END

74 **Mercedes Buyer** Deals, tips, top three steals and more
79 **NEXT MONTH**
80 **Buyer's Guide** The facelifted, first-generation GLC220d
86 **Running Reports** Latest updates on the Merc fleet
91 **Merc Trader** Find your next three-pointed star here
98 **From the archives** Owning a 124-series Saloon

The latest Mercedes launches, news and motorsport

News

Model updates

Mercedes-Benz updates multiple models with new powertrains, technologies and equipment

Mercedes-Benz has enhanced the specification of multiple models, with new powertrains, technologies and equipment packages now available to order in the UK.

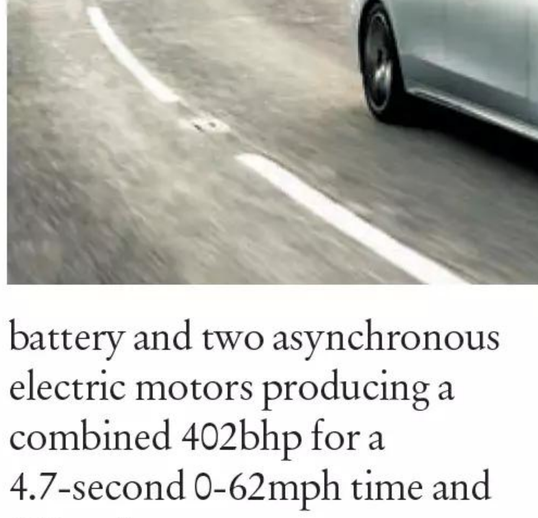
The new CLE300e Coupe plug-in hybrid is equipped with a two-litre petrol engine, 95kW electric motor and 25.4kWh battery for a combined output of 309bhp and 69-mile electric range. Starting at £60,610, the CLE300e accelerates from 0-62mph in 6.3 seconds and benefits from low emissions of 13 g/km and a pleasing eight per cent BiK tax rate.

Meanwhile, the EQE Saloon range now boasts new 350+ and 500 4Matic models. The single-motor, two-wheel drive 350+ powertrain features a larger 96kWh high-voltage battery and more powerful electric motor compared to the previous EQE300.

The EQE 350+ Saloon can travel up to 429 miles on a single charge and accelerate from a standstill to 62mph in 6.5 seconds – improvements of 49 miles and almost a full second versus the previous EQE300. The EQE500 4Matic is equipped with a 91kWh battery and two asynchronous electric motors producing a combined 402bhp for a 4.7-second 0-62mph time and 385-mile range.

Diesel-electric

Also updated are the E-Class and GLE, which can now be specified with diesel plug-in hybrid powertrains that couple a two-litre four-cylinder with 25.4kWh and 31.2kWh batteries respectively to achieve 68- and 63-mile electric ranges.



Better news still, most plug-in hybrid Mercedes-Benz models are now equipped with DC charging, making it even easier and faster for customers to recharge their PHEV at a compatible public charging station.

As for equipment, the new Refinement Package introduces Airmatic air suspension to the E-Class Saloon and Estate, and GLC. And the C-Class, E-Class, GLC and GLE can now be ordered in Urban Edition specifications, teaming AMG styling with plug-in hybrid powertrains.

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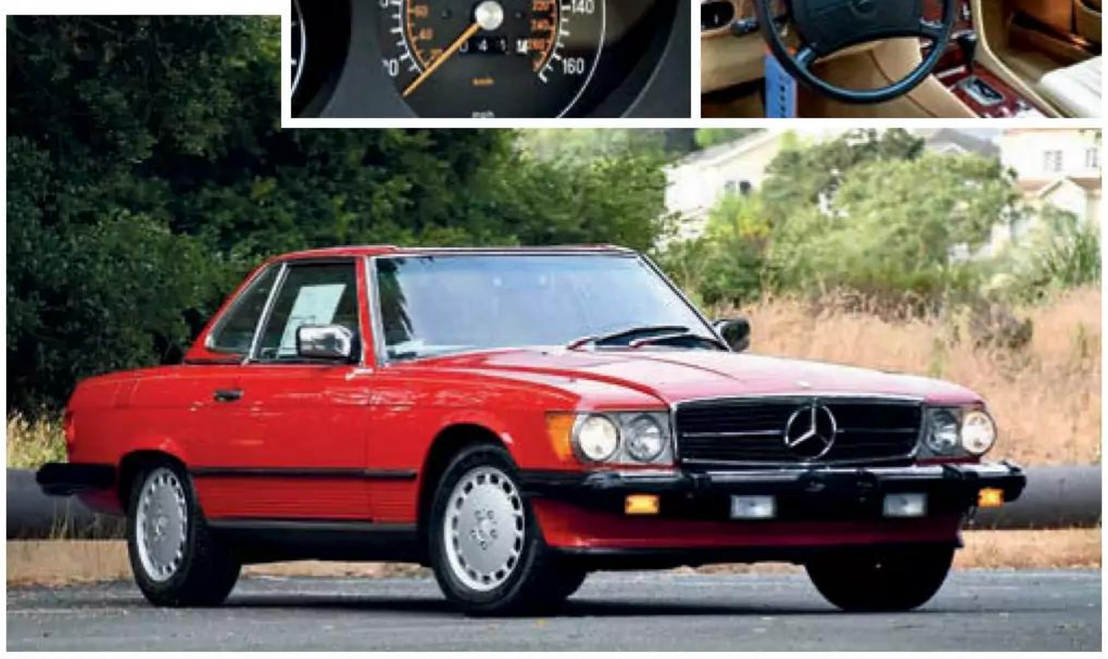
122-mile R107



A 1989 Mercedes-Benz 560SL with a scarcely believable 122 miles on the odometer sold for $260,400 (£197,771) at Broad Arrow's Monterey Jet Center 2024 auction held in mid-August. The pristine vehicle, described as a "time capsule" and delivered new to California, remains in preservation-grade condition, having been owned by a single family and kept in the private collection of a former Mercedes-Benz dealer. The car retains its original "Monroney" window sticker, still affixed to the passenger side window, and features factory VIN stickers on all body panels.

GT63 Pro

At the recent Goodwood Festival of Speed, Mercedes-AMG presented the new GT63 Pro 4Matic+, a more focused version of the regular GT63. With a 604bhp V8 biturbo engine, it accelerates from 0 to 62mph in 3.2 seconds, before hitting 124mph in 10.9 seconds and maxing out at 197mph.

The model features advanced aerodynamics, including a redesigned front apron, active air control systems, and a fixed rear wing, enhancing both longitudinal and lateral dynamics. Cooling has been extensively upgraded, with reinforced circuits and additional radiators ensuring optimal performance during high-speed driving. The GT63 Pro also comes with standard ceramic brakes, 21-inch forged wheels, and Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2R tyres for superior grip.

130 years

Mercedes-AMG is celebrating 130 years of motorsport with the launch of the limited-edition GT3 Edition 130Y Motorsport. This exclusive model marks the anniversary of the first automotive race from Paris to Rouen on July 22 1894, where a Daimler engine secured victory. Unveiled at Pebble Beach's Automotive Week, the GT3 Edition 130Y merges modern racing technology with design elements from 1950s race cars.

Boasting 671bhp, it is the most powerful GT3 ever produced by Mercedes-AMG and the final version to feature a naturally-aspirated engine. This non-homologated special model is a collector's dream, with only 13 units available worldwide.

News in brief

△ AMG PURESPEED
Prototypes of the limited-run Mercedes-AMG PureSpeed, complete with F1-inspired HALO protection system, are undergoing final testing before 250 units are released for sale.

△ NEW EVO AT AUCTION
The HWA AG EVO super saloon Chassis 000 achieved €1,310,000 (around £1,100,000) at RM Sotheby's Tegernsee Auction in late July.

△ RALLY LEGEND PASSES
Former Mercedes-Benz works racing driver Ewy Rosqvist died aged 94 on July 4 2024. Career highlights include winning the 1962 VI Argentinian Touring Car Grand Prix, the 1963 Women's Cup at the Monte Carlo Rally, and third place in the gruelling 1964 Spa-Sofia-Liège Rally.

▽ STARS AT THE BEACH
Cars present at Pebble Beach 2024 included a 1924 Mercedes Targa Florio racer, a 1932 Maybach Zeppelin DS8, 1955 Mercedes-Benz W196R and 1970 C111-II with four-rotor Wankel engine.

Maybach SL

Mercedes-Maybach has unveiled the 577bhp SL680 Monogram Series, the sportiest model in its history. This two-seater V8 convertible showcases a unique blend of colors and materials, featuring the Maybach pattern throughout its design. At launch, two curated design concepts will be available: Red Ambience, with a two-tone obsidian black and garnet red exterior, and White Ambience, pairing obsidian black with opalite white. The luxurious interior includes sustainably tanned crystal white Manufaktur Exclusive nappa leather. The SL680 Monogram Series will debut in Europe in spring 2025, with a broader market rollout to follow.

Antonelli in F1

Multiple grand prix winner George Russell (pictured right) will be partnered by 18-year-old Andrea Kimi Antonelli (left) for 2025 as the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team unveils its new driver line-up. The news follows the announcement that Lewis Hamilton is leaving Mercedes for Ferrari at the end of the 2024 season, ending a partnership that has given him over 80 wins and six world drivers' championships.

Toto Wolff (centre), Team Principal & CEO of the Mercedes-AMG F1 Team, commented, "Our 2025 driver line-up combines experience, talent, youth and out-and-out raw speed. We are excited about what George and Kimi bring to the team both as individual drivers, but also as a partnership. Our new line-up is perfect to open the next chapter in our story. It is also a testament to the strength of our junior programme and our belief in home-grown talent."

Antonelli steps up from FIA F2 and graduates from the team's junior programme, like Russell before him.

‘TALKING POINT’

This month’s Talking Point...

What is your favourite modified Merc?

“AMG’s C124 Hammer Widebody or Koenig’s R129 SL.” **Bens Fill**

“The Brabus Bullit 800 with a V12 twin-turbo – the ultimate 204 C-Class, in my opinion!” **Paul Howard**

“Having just seen it, probably the SEC convertible by tuner bb shown in that picture!” **Lucy Davis**

“A few years ago, you ran a story on a red Brabus 190E 3.6S. Just a fabulous thing.” **Thomas Gray**

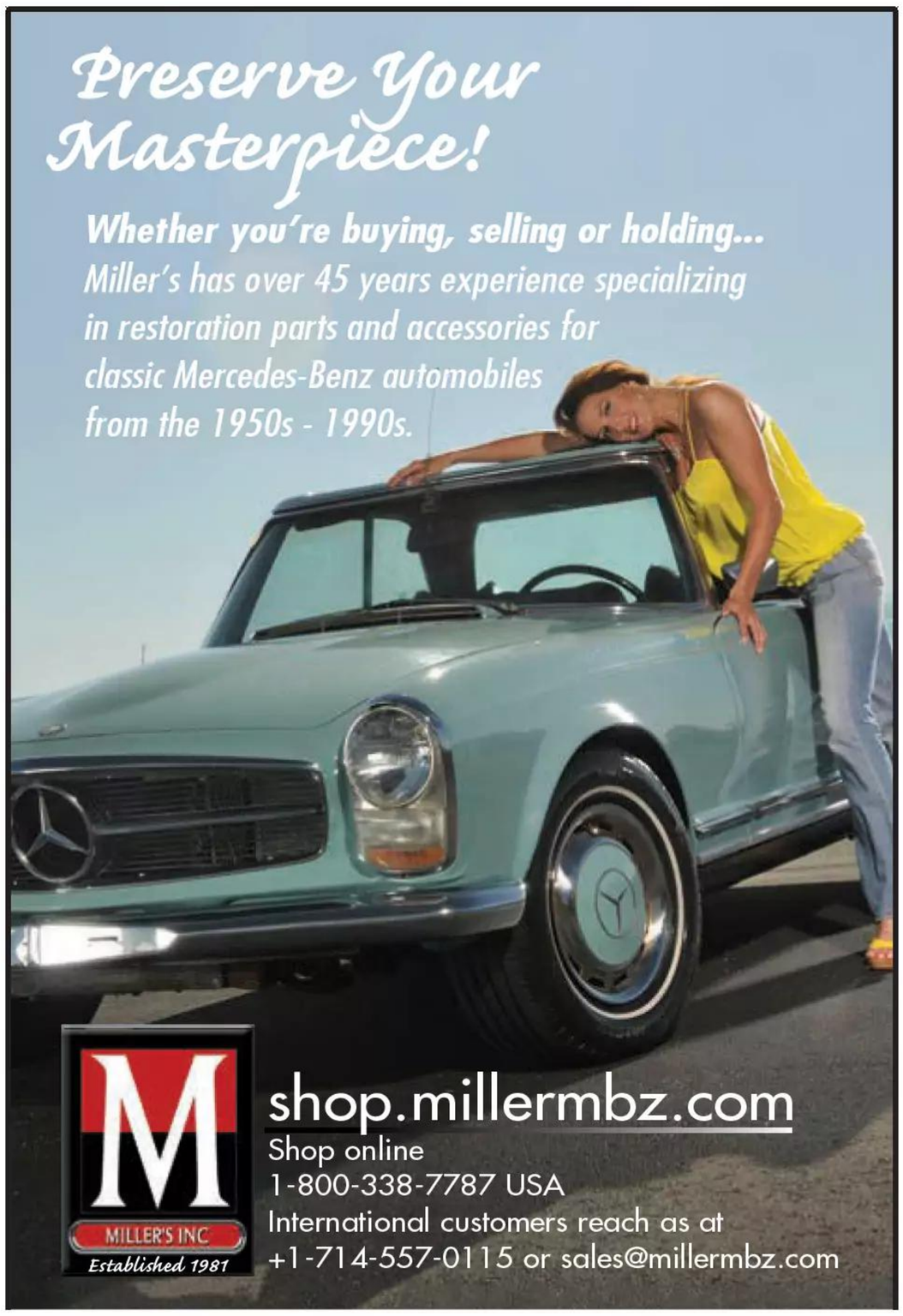
“I’ve always liked the 123s by AMG on wide tyres.” **Dave Gooding**

Take part in **Talking Point** every month on Facebook, Instagram and X. See the bottom of page 6 for our respective websites!

Merc Spotter

“I discovered this G-Class in Grünstadt, Germany,” Uwe Schulz told us. “It is a fire brigade version, formerly Military Police.”

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.



For decades, the mythical Rudi Klein Collection has remained shrouded in secrecy, its remarkable cars exposed to the elements in a secluded California scrapyard. This legendary trove, believed to house some of the rarest automobiles ever built, including a long-lost Alloy Gullwing and other fabled models, was once only the subject of whispers among enthusiasts.

RM Sotheby's is understandably thrilled to unveil 'The Junkyard: The Rudi Klein Collection,' a trove of automotive legends that will finally be revealed at auction in October 2024. The collection, preserved in its untouched state since Rudi Klein's passing in 2001, includes significant models recently returned from Europe, and will be made available for the first time in over 50 years. The upcoming auctions will offer a rare glimpse into this storied collection, making it a historic event for car collectors and enthusiasts alike.

The auction will feature standout vehicles such as the 1935 Mercedes-Benz 500K 'Caracciola' Special Coupe, the rare 1955 Mercedes-Benz 300SL 'Alloy' Gullwing, and the unique 1967 Iso Grifo A3/L Spider Prototype by Bertone, among others.

WORDS **RM SOTHEBY'S** IMAGES **KEGUN MORKIN/RM SOTHEBY'S**

Star Shot

Recalling trailblazing Mercedes-Benz cars of yesteryear

Mercedes-Benz built 169,433 R230 SLs from 2001 to 2011.

R230 SL

Gunning for Porsche's 911 in the dynamics department, the R230 SL of 2001 packed powerful engines and high-tech capabilities the likes of which Mercedes' iconic roadster had never wielded before

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

At a number of motorsport levels, Mercedes-Benz and Porsche were friendly but serious rivals for many years. However, in the showroom their paths didn't cross: if you wanted a raw and racy sports car you signed up for Zuffenhausen's air cooling, but if comfort and refinement was the priority then your name went down for an SL.

This all changed as the 20th Century arrived, once Stuttgart decided that the replacement for the conservatively engineered and styled R129 SL would go head-to-head with the world's most loved and respected sports car. In July 2001, at the Deichtorhallen modern art museum in Hamburg, the world found out what that looked like.

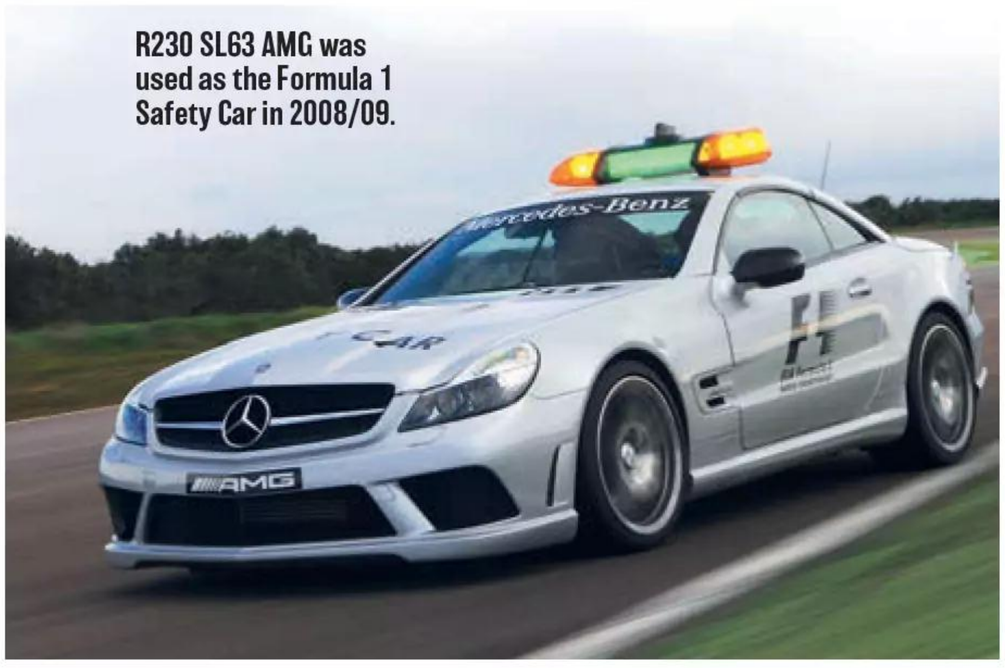
While the all-new SL, the R230, bore traditional Mercedes hallmarks, it was sensationally modern, sleek and sporty looking, rendering its predecessor a staid and out of date looking cruiser from the days when Mercedes courted only a 'mature' clientele. And time behind the wheel would soon confirm, not least due to the electronic chassis control, that Porsche was no longer the only show in town when it came to driver appeal.

So much about the R230 was high-tech. The Sensotronic Brake Control (SBC) system was drive-by-wire (in other words no cable link from the pedal) and enhanced the braking effort, including splitting pressure side to side when necessary, while the electronic Active Body Control (ABC) – first seen on the C215 CL in 1999 – reduced body roll during cornering and braking.

Besides the roof, the bonnet, front wings, doors and bootlid were made from aluminium to save weight, as was the new multi-link rear axle. The interior was as modern as the exterior styling, the angular lines of the R129 dashboard and trim giving way to flowing curves and the appearance for the first time in an SL the Comand screen in the centre console.

The first model to be introduced was the SL500, using the normally-aspirated, three-valves-per-cylinder, five-litre M113 good for 302bhp and 339lb ft torque. This was surely the perfect two-seat roadster, the V8 jewel under the bonnet possibly the world's best engine. But with that in place, four months later Mercedes unveiled a stablemate, the SL55 AMG, equipped with the same M113 engine bored and stroked

▷ Supercharged 5.4-litre V8 of SL55 made 493-510bhp.



R230 SL63 AMG was used as the Formula 1 Safety Car in 2008/09.

△ AMGs included SL55, SL63 and SL65 cars.

Big sweeping curves feature throughout the high-tech cabin.

to 5.4 litres and supercharged by the Affalterbach-based tuner Mercedes had purchased two years earlier, and which was initially quoted at 469bhp but very soon after 493bhp.

If it seemed too tame for some in standard form, customers could specify the AMG Performance Package comprising features from the SL55 AMG used as 2002's F1 Safety Car. Wheels were an inch bigger than standard at 19-inch (with 255/35 front and 285/30 rear tyres) and in a twin-spoke style, while behind them lurked larger brake discs, with the Sensotronic brake system itself optimised. The suspension was firmed up, and there was a different front spoiler section, containing an additional engine oil cooler.

Further delights were in the pipeline, the first few months of 2003 seeing the range topped and tailed with the SL350 and the V12 SL600. The former used the then new M112 3.7-litre V6 producing 242bhp, and in line with its 'base model' status did not have standard fit ABC suspension though it was optional. The SL600's 5.5-litre M275 engine was also all-new and, unlike the R129 SL V12, employed two turbochargers and produced 493bhp backed up with 590lb ft.

> **"Besides the roof, the bonnet, front wings, doors and bootlid were made from aluminium to save weight"**

Surely all this horsepower was enough to assert the new SL's authority? No, in summer 2004 the super wealthy were further tormented when the SL65 AMG was added to the range, powered by a six-litre version of the twin-turbo V12 delivering a surely outrageous 604bhp and 737lb ft (a round 1,000Nm). This very low-volume model was in fact a brute of a car, on which you reached for ESP deselect button only after careful consideration, but the bragging rights were unsurpassed.

So right for its time, the R230 SL become a difficult one for Mercedes-Benz to replace. An extensive but arguably botched update in 2008 not only diluted the original's sharp lines, but stole the thunder of the next-generation R231 SL when it arrived four years later, as the 'Mk2' R230 had looked so similar to it.

The R230 did have one disappointing flaw – its reduced build quality compared to the R129, less solid feeling and before too long showing rust. But it's a roadster that feels barely dated, thanks to wonderful engines, clever chassis and a roof system that still astonishes. The choice model for many is the SL500, a beautifully balanced car without the complication and cost of the AMGs.

And there's another bonus: the price. R230s are presently the cheapest SLs by a long way. Under £3,000 buys an early SL350 or SL500 (which may or may not be a good idea), while £15,000 to £20,000 commands a decent enough 2012 car. Becoming an SL owner is cheaper than you might think.

Folding metal vario-roof stowed inside the boot.

Insight from a Mercedes-Benz tuning industry veteran

Changing times

Coupes and cabriolets were once stout pillars of Mercedes-Benz in the era when the three-pointed star never blew with the wind, but made the weather. So what happened? Ian Kuah investigates...

The mid-range E-Class has always been large enough to incorporate all the best qualities of the Mercedes-Benz marque. This is one reasons why the 124-series is arguably the best car that Mercedes has made, with good examples of its four-seat Cabriolet version eagerly sought-after by classic Mercedes fans who enjoy al fresco family motoring.

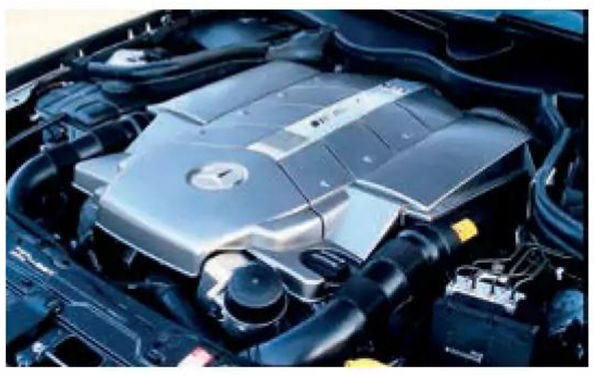
Given the importance of perception it seemed rather strange that the marketplace slots of the E-Class Coupe and Cabriolet were replaced by the CLK in 1996, based on the smaller C-Class platform. However, one CLK model that seemed right for enthusiasts was the CLK55 AMG in both 208- and 209-series forms.

Producing 342bhp in the former application, the naturally-aspirated, 5.4-litre V8 (M113) turned the C55 AMG in its Saloon and Estate forms into a proper Q-car. Having driven the 4.3-litre C43 AMG on the combined launch event with the W210 E55 AMG, I found the C-Class chassis to be sportier and a lot more fun than its softer big brother. With much longer legs and without the highly-strung nature of the C36 AMG, the 302bhp C43 AMG felt like it could handle the extra power and torque of the 5.4-litre V8, which proved the case.

In 209-series CLK55 AMG form, however, this engine/chassis combination felt less of a hot rod and more of a grown up high-performance coupe/cabriolet with the ability to effortlessly cover hundreds of miles in a day. Suave was its middle name.

While the C63 AMG continued to grow the compact super saloon legend for Mercedes, the 209-series CLK63 Coupe and Cabriolet did not in their respective segments. By the time the facelifted 209-series CLK arrived, AMG was shining the spotlight on its in-house developed, 6,208cc V8 (M156), and this was duly installed in the C-Class (451bhp) and CLK (474bhp). But even with all that power, the CLK63 failed to take off in a big way with hundreds rather than thousands of cars sold.

△ The two-door E-Class is no more, replaced by the CLE; AMG's E53 4Matic+ ran a 429bhp V6 turbo motor.



△ 5.4-litre M113 V8 in the 209 CLK55 made 362bhp.

△ 2,893/2,711 CLK55 Coupes/Cabriolets made.

So why the low numbers? As expected, the answer is to be found in price and perception. As relatively low-volume models, AMG cars tend to be expensive, usually costing almost as much as the mainstream Mercedes from the next model range up. While the SLK55 AMG cost about £50,000 when new, would you buy an SLK55 AMG Black Series with its fixed roof for £77,000, which was more than the SL500 that looks so much more prestigious on your driveway? In the event, very few did.

> **"The market for four-seater convertibles has taken a big hit"**

The roadster renaissance that began with the Mazda MX-5 in 1989 took off like a rocket, ensuring the unqualified success of the BMW Z3, Mercedes SLK and others that followed in its wake. However, in the years leading up to the second decade of the 21st Century, the fortunes of the roadster and cabriolet began to wane quite markedly. This led to the demise of the SLK and required a joint venture between BMW and Toyota to justify the business case for the current Z4.

The market for four-seater convertibles has also taken a big hit along with the coupe versions on which these two-door cars are based. This seems particularly so at the top end where the C217 S-Class Coupe and A217 Convertible were slow movers off the showroom floor, as were BMW's 6-Series Coupe and Cabriolet.

However, the C238 E-Class Coupe and A238 Cabriolet did quite well. Stung by poor sales of the CLK55 and CLK63 AMG models that went before, there was no V8 in this model line-up, the E53 4Matic+ with biturbo V6 being the only AMG variant.

In the event, the E53 Cabriolet proved very popular in the huge US market and was a good value proposition. Its smooth, 429bhp six-cylinder made it a better daily driver for most non-enthusiasts than a rorty V8, while four-wheel-drive sealed the deal in States where the winter weather made a rear-wheel-drive AMG as much use as a chocolate teapot.

IMAGES IAN KUAH

‘Brightling’

Despite its 10.95mm height, the Trident C60 Pro 300 ‘Lumiére’ leaps from your wrist. (Just like it jumped off this page.) Its brightness results from proudly protruding indices and the logo they encircle. Featuring facets finely machined to tolerances of 0.03mm, these mini-monoliths are super-legible in daylight. But it’s the Globolight®, the unique luminous ceramic from which they’re hewn, that produces their astounding, super-brilliance at night. And inspired this timepiece’s name. The light show doesn’t end there. Carved from titanium, the 41mm case incorporates a second sapphire crystal displaying its super-accurate movement. But it’s not the back of this beautiful tool watch you’re buying into. Is it?

Do your research

Christopher Ward

christopherward.com

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

Dream diesel

Still wet behind the ears as a budding automotive journalist, David Sutherland couldn't believe his luck when he bagged the keys to a humble W123 Mercedes 300D, as he recalls...

July 23 2024 marked an important anniversary – for me, that is. On that day it was 45 years since I left my Edinburgh hometown to come down to London – or the Big Smoke, as we provincials called it – to begin work as a trainee staff writer on a car magazine. Edinburgh is a beautiful, vibrant city which is tough to leave if you've been brought up there, and it wasn't helped by my mother fighting back the tears as I boarded the train. Actually, thinking back, they may have been tears of joy at finally after 23 years being relieved of her annoying son, but we'll never know.

I moved from a comfortable house in a nice, south Edinburgh suburb into a draughty attic next to the constantly roaring A3, a main route into London from the south west. I had no friends, while my Scottish innocence was no match for Londoners who all seemed to know everything (they didn't, I'd discover in due course). But none of this mattered because despite mediocre academic achievement and an almost non-existent skill set, I had found myself driving lot of new cars on roads and test tracks, all full of free petrol, and being paid for it. It was a dream come true, although in the back of my mind I worried that one day I'd have to get a 'proper' job. But it stayed in the back of my mind because I never did, and here I am, still a motoring journalist, now old enough to be a grandfather to those starting out in this 'profession'.

The new cars to test and report on came thick and fast: Fords, Nissans, Austins and so forth, and a treat would be a BMW or Saab, or something with a bit of prestige. But one marque I really wanted to experience was slow in arriving: Mercedes-Benz. That was partly because the two Stuttgart models launched in 1979, the 126-series S-Class and the original G-Wagen, were still on the international launch circuit and hadn't yet arrived in the UK, and also because the importer wasn't inclined to scatter press demonstrators like confetti in the way volume carmakers did.

The Mercedes I finally did get to drive wasn't particularly high up the model hierarchy, but it was memorable: a W123 300D automatic in Mercedes' 1970s brown, but with smart green fabric/leather, JRK 546V also equipped with the optional Mexican hat wheels and electric sunroof. The person writing the road test gave the 300D a mixed verdict, claiming "the diesel rattle on start-up is most incongruous for an £11,000 status symbol whose appearance speaks speed and luxury."

△ The writer took a bank holiday trip to Scotland in a W123.

△ David's test car had an electric sunroof and optional rims.

> **"Even I couldn't deny the engine delivered only the most leisurely performance"**

That criticism didn't occur to me because I was smitten with this wonderful car, and it may have been during this time when diesels took 0.3 per cent of the UK car market (compared to near 40 per cent at the 2016, pre-dieselgate peak) that my long-standing fondness for oil burners took root. While others involved in the magazine test drove the 300D only briefly, I found myself in charge of it for the bank holiday weekend, prompting an unplanned three-day trip back to Scotland.

Even I couldn't deny that with just 87bhp (up from the previous 79bhp) the three-litre, five-cylinder engine delivered only the most leisurely performance. Zero to 62mph in just under 18 seconds was three seconds off the pace of a base model Ford Fiesta, although in fairness the 300D looked quick compared to the W123 200D which with an autobox took almost 30 seconds. But I cruised the M1, the M6 and the winding, pretty A68 through Northumberland and the Scottish borders in a state of supreme happiness, often at very low speeds when the engine fell off the cam. My colleague was spot on when he wrote that "the big diesel lends a relaxed dignified air to any journey."

The 300D's OM617 was a landmark diesel engine for Mercedes-Benz, famed not only for an outstanding refinement at the time which opened the door for the 'luxury diesel', but for extraordinary longevity. JRK 546V is sadly but unsurprisingly no longer in existence, according to the DVLA, but if I think about that car I wonder what its final mileage was. I like to think it was bordering on 200,000 miles and its eventual demise was due to a rusted-out chassis, not a failure of its beating heart. In 45 years, many barely remembered or forgotten cars have come my way, fleetingly, but the brown W123 diesel is one I can still picture clearly.

IMAGES MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG

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Social Club

Mercedes-Benz related highlights from the world of social media

RennTech Classics

@renntechclassics

This incredible, 420 horsepower E60 AMG 4Matic Estate runs on RennTech's Monolite wheels and hits 60mph from standing in 4.7 seconds. A quarter-mile is completed in 13.4 seconds at 103mph. The price when new in 2001 was $151,000!

Harrison & Hardwick

@harrisonandhardwick

Mercedes-Benz G320 Cabriolet (W463). One of 154 built between 1997 and 2000. Brilliant Silver metallic over red hide. Exceptional condition throughout – recent dry ice blasting underneath and 'Level 3' correction detail by @topazdetailing. Just returned from Mercedes-Benz Heathrow with a clean bill of health.

A7 Photocar

@a7photocar

Mercedes-Benz E500 – the best or nothing.

Edward Hall Classic Mercedes

@edwardjshall

The barn/garage finds are still out there; this rare RHD/UK-supplied W109 300SEL 3.5 has sat since 1982, but hasn't really been driven since 1978. It's got surface rust to the outer panels but is very solid underneath and has a lovely interior. It will be for sale with more info once we've got it unloaded and have had time to check it out.

Mercedes-Maybach

@mercedesmaybach

Seeing double? It's the mirrored craftmanship of@ robbeberkingclassicsin the latest Mercedes-Maybach S-Class.

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The SLShop

SLShop UK

1968 Mercedes-Benz W113 280SL Pagoda. Automatic, right-hand drive, Anthracite Grey (172) and black leather (241).

Casting Automobiles

@castingautomobiles

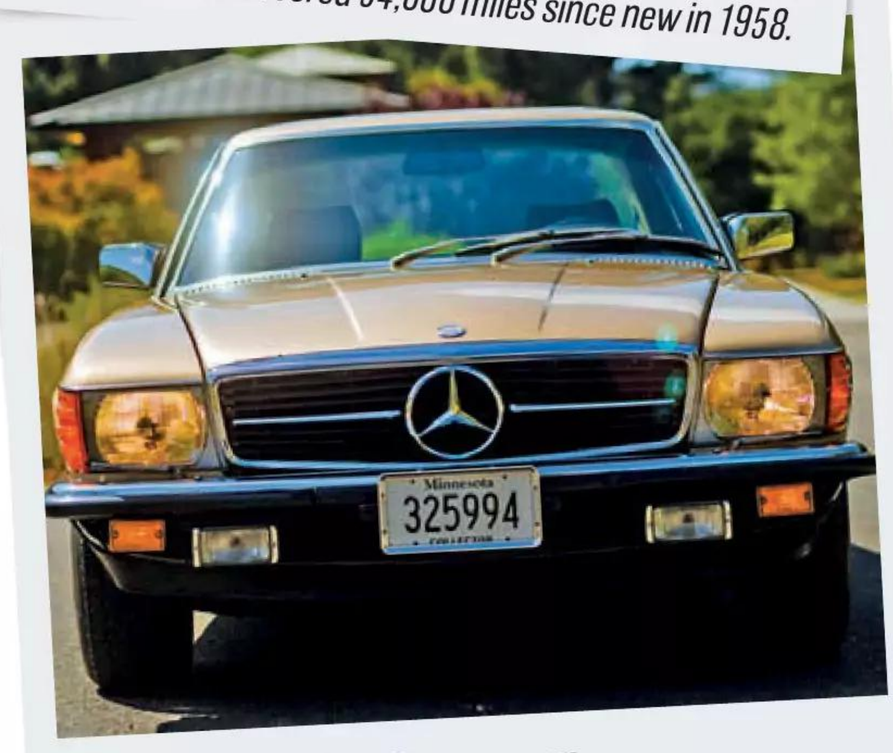
Fantastically rare 300CE-24 3.4 AMG painted in gorgeous Crystal Green. The Paris-based seller reckoned this 100,000km (62,000-mile) coupe was worth €95,000 (£81,000).

The MB Market

The MB Market

This 1985 Mercedes-Benz 280SL is one of approximately 7,300 units produced with the M110 in-line six-cylinder engine paired with a manual transmission and shows 36,000 miles from new. This example was intended as a grey market import into the United States from new and shipped from Antwerp, Belgium to the Port of Los Angeles, California on August 19 1985.

This striking R107 is finished in Signal Red (568) over black leather (271) with a black fabric soft top (740).



Fast Classics

Fast Classics

We spotted this 1958 W121 190SL at Fast Classics in West Sussex. The Signal Red roadster carried a price tag of £77,495 and had covered 54,000 miles since new in 1958.

Kingdom Specialist Cars

@kingdomspecialistcargroup

Just bought this 2006 Mercedes-Benz SLK350 (R171). Only 17,900 miles with excellent service history. Another SLK we have in stock is a superb 2003 SLK230 Kompressor (R170) with only 25,000 miles. Both are for sale.

The SLK350 is POA and the SLK230 Kompressor is £7,500.

Scott Grundfor Company

Scott Grundfor Company

After an insane Opening Ceremony to the Paris Olympic Games, we're celebrating the pursuit of gold in style with this 1981 powerhouse Mercedes-Benz 500SLC in 473 Champagne.

Cover story

'BAHN STORMER

Parked and left to gather dust for 17 years, this SL73 AMG was discovered by Mechatronik and treated to a comprehensive restoration. Ian Kuah shares this rare roadster's story before getting behind the wheel and experiencing the AMG V12

WORDS **IAN KUAH** IMAGES **IAN KUAH & MECHATRONIK**

As cars with significant provenance and rarity value are a better bet than money sitting in the bank depreciating at the whims and fancies of market forces, the values of pre-merger AMG cars are at an all-time high.

If you want to celebrate the glorious days of the internal combustion engine in style, the larger the displacement the better. Thus, a search for the biggest, baddest pre-merger AMG cars can only end with the 7.3-litre M120 V12 that was available off-catalogue for the mid- to late-90s S-Class, CL and SL.

Every SL73 AMG like the one seen here began life as an SL600 with the AMG Styling Package, which consisted of the AMG body styling kit and multi-piece 8.5Jx and 9.5Jx 18-inch alloys shod with 245/45ZR18 and 275/35ZR18 rubber. ▷

◁ A full machine polish of the Amber Red body was for starters.

▷ Apart from provenance, the difference between an old car and a classic one is time and perspective. This is why every now and then we hear about significant 'barn finds' where cars tucked away in a garage somewhere are unearthed years later, often after their owners have passed on. In the interim, the world has moved on and those cars are now valuable classics, with enthusiasts in the know getting excited about their recommissioning.

It is pretty hard to forget about one of the approximately 85 SL73 AMG Roadsters built, especially if you commissioned it at great cost and have your name inscribed on the bespoke sill plates and your initials on the gearknob. However, this 1999 car and its owner were separated under less than happy circumstances.

The paperwork that came with the car revealed that the original owner, Wolfgang Lanzendörfer, had written a cheque for over DM350,000, which equated to €175,000 when the single currency was launched that very same year. The cost of the 7.3-litre engine conversion alone was DM99,180 DM (€49,590), an eye-watering amount at the time – and now!

Launched in the 140-series 600SE/SEL in 1991 with a 5,987cc displacement from an oversquare bore and stroke of 89.0x80.2mm, the quad-cam, 48-valve M120 V12 produced 402bhp and 428lb ft of torque in its early form, numbers deep inside supercar territory at the time. The 140-series 600SEC coupe and R129 600SL followed within months.

When AMG got to work on this motor its engineers took the first leap to 7,010cc, and then 7,055c before ending up with 7,291cc via a near square bore and stroke of

Modest looking tailpipes connected to an unsubtle V12.

"The paperwork that came with the car revealed that the original owner, Wolfgang Lanzendörfer, had written a cheque for over DM350,000"

When we said the SL73 was left to gather dust, we weren't joking!

◁ 38,000km (23,900 miles) covered since new back in the year 1999.

△ The SL73 rides on 18-inch multi-piece rims and weighs 2,050kg.

▽ AMG bored and stroked the SL600's four-valve M120 V12 to 91.5x92.4mm.

91.5x92.4mm. This delivered a rated output of 518bhp at 5,500rpm with 553lb ft of torque at 4,000rpm, which means that the big V12 is very under-stressed with its modest specific output of 71bhp per litre. Against the stopwatch, the big numbers are 0-62mph in 4.8 seconds, 0-124mph in 15 seconds flat, and a top speed of 186mph without the 155mph limiter in place.

Herr Lanzendörfer went above and beyond when he ordered the SL600 base car, specifying Amber Red metallic paint and the designo two-tone black and red leather interior subtly embellished with red double stitching on the black leather of the dashtop, doors and seat bolsters. Coloured carbon fibre had just been introduced at the time and this SL's centre console, gearknob, doors and steering wheel top and bottom received dark red carbon fibre, whose warm tone and visual depth adds an exotic finishing touch to the already luxurious cabin.

More than just witnessing the introduction of the Euro, 1999 was also the year when DaimlerChrysler AG became the majority shareholder in AMG. As this car was delivered to AMG on July 28 1999 for its conversion to be carried out, it was one of the first post-merger cars to leave Affalterbach. The documentation shows that the SL73 was certified by the TÜV office in Affalterbach on August 11 1999, making it officially ready for delivery to its presumably rather excited owner.

Unfortunately, four years later Herr Lanzendörfer's company ran into problems and he filed for bankruptcy. The SL was auctioned off and purchased by the present owner in 2005. However, it turned out that he was too busy to drive the car and it languished in his underground car park near Stuttgart gathering dust. Lots of dust ▷

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It is believed AMG made only 85 of these 7.3-litre V12s.

◁△ A leather dash top and amazing red carbon fibre feature within this robustly made R129 SL Roadster.

"Herr Lanzendörfer went above and beyond when he ordered the SL600 base car"

▷ judging by the photographs Mechatronik took when the car was decanted from a covered trailer in its workshop car park.

Meant to be

Chapter three of the story began in March 2024 when the son of the second owner contacted Mechatronik for an assessment of how much work would be required to recommission the car. It turned out that the owner was considering selling the SL73 and as Mechatronik were keen to buy it this was one of those times when all the stars aligned.

First of all, Mechatronik's valeting department gave the Mercedes a good wash to remove the years of dust and grime. A machine polish brought back the deep lustre of the paint that Mercedes used before the later water-based process became dominant. The interior was also cleaned and detailed and came up well. That said, having covered 38,000km (23,600 miles) this car is far from concours, with stone chips and other signs of the proper use before it was laid up in 2005, giving it the patina of a car that was bought to be enjoyed.

Next, the engineers went through the car with a fine-toothed comb, checking the engine's internals with an endoscope. All was well inside but as a car's fuel system always suffers from years of neglect a new fuel pump and filter were fitted, and the fuel injectors were removed and checked. The coil packs were in good working order and now sit above a new set of spark plugs. An oil and filter change for the engine and auto were also carried out.

Under the car, the rear axle hydraulic self-levelling system was checked and a new set of the latest Michelin Pilot Sport 5 tyres were fitted. Far in advance of anything available when the SL73 was new, this rubber has improved the ride, handling and grip by a magnitude or more.

Not for sale

Now restored to rude health, this SL73 AMG was the reason that I recently found myself at Mechatronik to drive and photograph one of the few pre-merger AMG models that I missed when it was minted a quarter of a century ago. But first I will deliver the bad news for any wealthy collector who fancies this car as it is now part of Mechatronik's private collection and is not for sale.

Even from a distance, the Amber Red metallic hue really pops under the early May mid-morning sun. What is also apparent is that while the R129 SL was regarded as big for a two-seater back in the '90s, it is dwarfed by the current Mercedes models in the car park.

Opening the door and dropping into the well-padded driver's seat, I was reminded just how 'hewn from solid' the Bruno Sacco designed era of Mercedes cars feel. No starter button here – you have to put a real key into a real steering lock and turn it to activate the ignition and start the car. The starter whirrs for a second before the big V12 bursts into life with a bellow from its ▷

23 years after the last was made, the SL73 still feels epic.

▷ twin exhausts. The AMG sports exhaust makes an angry sound when you blip the throttle, the SL73 rocking from the torque reaction. But that anger is distant, with a refined undertone compared to the gravelly voiced, AMG fettled V8s.

Solid is the word you would use to describe the feel of the shorty, stubby gearlever that you hold in your palm as you step on the brake pedal and coax the lever through its dog-leg gate towards D.

Moving off, I re-orientate myself to a generation of SL that I have not driven for some years. With its hardtop in place the R129 has the hewn from the solid granite feel of a period Mercedes coupe, but is both lower and more compact than the C140.

"The SL73 picks up its side skirts and flies with a deep chested bellow"

The SL73 AMG tips the scales at a whopping 2,050kg, which gives you the feeling that it pummels bumps into submission as much as it skims over them. The power-assisted recirculating ball steering is not as precise as the rack and pinion system introduced on the succeeding R230 SL, and combined with the car's obvious mass the slightly vague feel at the tiller delivers the message that this is a grand tourer rather than a sports car.

Given its head on a local autobahn, the SL73 picks up its side skirts and flies with a deep chested bellow from under the long prow, and a solid push in the back as the revs rise and the scenery rushes past at an increasing rate.

A pinnacle car in its time, the bombastic SL73 AMG stands as a testament to what Hans Werner Aufrecht's pre-merger AMG offered its wealthy customers at the turn of the century. An autobahn stormer par excellence, its ability to cover distance rapidly in comfort is punctuated only by how fast you can empty the 80-litre fuel tank.

Thank you to Mechatronk for its assistance with this feature ***Web*** *mechatronik.de*

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz SL73 AMG (R129)

Engine M120 7,291cc V12 **Power** 518bhp@5,500rpm **Torque** 553lb ft@4,000rpm **Transmission** 5-speed auto, rwd **Weight** 2,050kg

0-62mph 4.8sec **Top speed** 155mph **Fuel consumption** 17.8mpg **Years produced** 1999-2001 **Number built** 85 approx.

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption according to EEC urban; top speed electronically limited

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Twins

Discovery of not one but two high-mile modern classic Mercedes finished in matching Petrol Green paintwork begins a journey of enlightenment for their new keeper

WORDS **RYAN G HEMPHILL**

In a recent conversation with a confederate regarding his long-distance purchase of a 1997 C36 AMG, he lamented the dangers of buying a 20-plus-year-old Mercedes – sight-unseen – through the mounting financial toll of playing catch-up on decades of deferred maintenance. This is a sound lesson for anyone in the habit of buying and collecting older European cars, and one I've invariably learned myself via the 30-odd vintage Mercedes I've purchased personally over the years.

With that in mind, it must therefore be asked: What kind of self-destructive, foolish masochist, one who is purported to possess any knowledge or savvy whatsoever about buying older M-B cars, wilfully purchases a nearly 40-year-old Mercedes-Benz with over 535,000km (332,000 miles) on the clock and plucked from the frozen tundra of the rust-laden, oxidation haven of the great white north also known as the greater Toronto Metropolitan Area? Not me, that's for sure. I bought two…

In the autumn of 2019, I purchased two matching 35-plus-year-old Mercedes-Benz diesels out of Canada at the behest of one of my partners. My partner had been in Toronto looking at another collection of Canadian barn finds when he happened across an advert for the cars on a website called Kijiji which, roughly translated, is Canadian for "risky click".

▽ Original ad clipping for the 1983 '300TDT'.

To be fair, the photos in the ad looked extremely promising and the storybook-esque prospect of purchasing this pampered pair from the steadfast, long-term, octogenarian owner named Milton was too good to resist. Besides, as Milton touted in the original ad, the cars both "come with service records". Service records, as we learned in due course, are a critical component to any confident purchase of an aging Mercedes. However, I would later discover that Milton's simple statement regarding the presence of records was – all hyperbole aside – the understatement of Milton's then 84 years on this planet.

Of the pair, the car that primarily piqued our interest was the 123-series: a beautiful 1983 300TD Estate finished in Petrol Green metallic (877) over mushroom leather (255) interior. The wagon came equipped with European headlamps and some clever, dealer-optioned goodies such as Bosch yellow foglights, Rial honeycomb wheels and a zebrano wood horn pad cover.

Despite owning this 1983 model year example since 1984, we were surprised to learn that Milton ▷

◁ The aftermarket wheels were part of this 123's appeal to its latest keeper.

Mercedes' first 'official' estate is now collectable.

▷ was not, in fact, the original owner. Milton purchased the car in September 1984 in virtually as-new condition from a German citizen who had emigrated earlier that year. During the early 1980s, European immigrants to Canada were allowed to circumvent certain import taxes and fees by bringing with them one vehicle from their home country to be registered in Canada.

In this instance, the original purchaser of the 300TD T-model had recognised the value prospect in bringing with him a brand new, duty-free Mercedes station wagon that he could sell for a profit upon settling in Canada and, as the datacard shows, he special-ordered the car explicitly for this purpose. Accordingly, Milton purchased this practically brand new Mercedes clocking barely more than a delivery-mile equivalent from a pre-*kijijian* newspaper classified advert on September 11 1984 for $36,500 (or $84,174.89 adjusted for inflation).

As conveniently fantastical as Milton's original purchase story might sound, the datacard backs it up. This car sports the rare Option Code 820 'Toursiten-Fahrzeuge' or 'Tourist Vehicle'. Additionally, the Order Number/ Destination further confirms this as: '#0340202003 (Destination: Tourist (Except for USA))'. One quizzical quirk about this particular example is the presence of European headlights and a European-style speedometer (in kph) matched with the larger, US-spec bumpers.

The bumpers were originally thought to have been an aftermarket change made by Milton but, as the datacard again confirms, this is not the case. The datacard shows that this was actually an Option Code 491 'US Version' car with Option Code 463 'Instrument Km/H For Canada'. Thus, solving the mystery of the seemingly mismatched international combination spec (otherwise known as the 'NAFTA spec').

The perfect pair

The twin to this very special 'long-roof' was the W126: an equally beautiful 1985 300SD Saloon also finished in Petrol Green metallic over white grey leather interior (119). This

"Of the pair, the car that primarily piqued our interest was the 123-series"

regular-wheelbase diesel variant of the Mercedes flagship saloon was purchased by Milton much later than the wagon – approximately 2010 – but the assiduous level of care given to each car remained constant.

Clearly, when it came to Petrol Green metallic diesels, he couldn't be satisfied with just one. As he recalled, after his children had grown, Milton no longer had a need for the extra space and utility that his beloved wagon offered, but he didn't dare get rid of it. He did

△ Rear wheelarches encroach on boot space just a little - but there is still a lot of room for various belongings.

▽ The 300TD's clean engine bay is home to an in-line five-cylinder engine making 123bhp in the Euro market.

the sensible thing that any Merc enthusiast would do: just go out and buy the matching S-Class to keep the wagon company.

In truth, this pair simply couldn't be separated; the universe would not allow it. They are twins through and through: Matching petrol green metallic paint, matching turbocharged, three-litre diesel OM617 powerplants, matching mileages at an astounding 535,000km each, matching Mercedes 'High-mileage Awards' and badges and, most importantly, matching levels of maintenance and care bordering on the obsessive thanks to the legendarily, uber fastidious Milton.

Toronto to New York City

After agreeing on a price, my partner and our mechanic Steve languidly drove both diesels the eight hours in tandem from Toronto to NYC without a single mechanical hitch; a confidence-inspiring testament to the overall condition of these twin M-Bs. Upon arrival, we discovered a cardboard box in the back of the 300TD Estate containing the records that Milton spoke about in his advert.

We expected to find some interesting documentation given Milton's long-term ownership of the cars, but nothing would prepare me for the deluge of ink and carbon paper that was uncovered. In total, following nearly a full week spent sorting, serialising, stacking, sleeving, deciphering and photographing the contents of the box, we discovered that Milton had amassed over 1,200 detailed pages of notes and records for these two gems of the glow plug era.

To understand these cars and their record-setting volume of records, you have to understand the man behind them: Milton Rusonik, a dapper, eccentric, 84-year-old Canadian attorney who, if nothing else, seemed to wake up every morning with a packet of Sanka only to diligently hand-scribe a new list entitled: "How can I spend money on these cars today?" Not that I'm complaining, of course, because without Milton's peculiar attention to detail, including annual underbody rustproofing by Krown Inc of greater Toronto, these two metallic Mercedes would have rotted into oblivion before Alanis Morrissette wrapped up her last season of *You Can't Do That on Television*.

As a result of this diligent, annual, nether-regional chore, each car is protected by an inch-thick coat of godknowswhat™ that will leave their underbodies standing long after our robot overlords have laid waste to the surrounding landscape following the apocalypse. Milton revealed that the secret to his special undercoating mixture is "used engine oil from a car with a good engine… You spray it on there and the car will go as long as you want it to go". ▷

▷ **Wood panel insert added to the large-rimmed steering wheel; four-speed automatic fitted here.**

▽ **Old paperwork explains this car's Euro speedometer and headlights, and the larger US-style bumpers.**

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▷ Eccentricities aside, Milton is also an extremely gentle and sentimental man, and this comes across in his decades of affection for his beloved Mercedes. His recollection of loading nearly all of his 10 grandchildren into the wagon for family trips brought the flash of a wistful smile to the handsome weathering of his face. Fond remembrances visibly danced across his brow as he realised he's passing his old friends and memory-makers down the road; either that, or he's tallying up the $100,000-plus he's spent caring for them over the past three and a half decades.

History in the making

The contents of these varied vehicular volumes are hard to describe succinctly because they run the entire gamut for everything associated with these cars throughout Milton's tenure. Hundreds of pages of notes detailing every squeaky joint, loose bolt, odd sound or other "concern" that Milton had about them; always dated in the top right corner and scrawled in the manic, scripted cursive of a frazzled physician on bathtub speed.

The handwritten notes, thriftily written on the backs of scrap pages of old legal documents or real estate and development proposals from Milton's various business interests perfectly represent the intersection of his inherent frugality and his exorbitant expenditure on preventative maintenance items for his beloved Benzes. He scribbled notes both vertically and horizontally across each scrap page – never wasting a blank space or leaving an ounce of fat to be trimmed.

There are over 30 years of annual registrations and inspections, insurance cards, brakes, tyres, oil changes, alignments, suspension components and other consumables by the hundreds. There are even copies of Christmas cards to his favourite mechanics (with Xerox copies of the Christmas bonus/thank you cheques assiduously stapled to each one). There are dictated letters diligently drafted by his secretary, Rose, documenting his frustration with being overcharged less than a few dollars on a four-figure repair bill from a Mercedes dealer in the 1980s. Attached thereto, the dealer invoice for the one-figure refund is proudly displayed and annotated by hand.

There are also notes about where to get certain, hard-to-find parts for the complicated 123-series vacuum system at the best prices, as well as copies of newspaper and other automotive circular advertisements for similar 123s or 126s throughout the years. This was an exercise apparently undertaken to keep track of the current market for his babied Benzes as he spent lavishly on their good mechanical and cosmetic health.

There are both annual and quarterly hand-scribed calculations on what he'd spent on each car, followed by the receipts and service orders to back up his mathematics. There is also, quite incredibly, the original Toronto newspaper ad from September 11 1984 for the "blue-green" Mercedes station wagon with "aluminum wheels" that would become his apparent obsession over the next 38 years.

In all, it is a beautiful, overwhelming and somewhat terrifying tome of what a vintage M-B can potentially cost, in exchange for the ▷

◁ Power steering was standard, the full-width helm taking 2.89 turns lock-to-lock; four-speed auto again.

▽ Mercedes-Benz manufactured 78,725 of the 300SD Turbodiesel between the years 1980 and 1985.

"As conveniently fantastical as Milton's original purchase story might sound, the datacard backs it up"

▷ satisfaction and fulfillment it can clearly give; sufficient to lovingly spend it, and document it, with a sense exuding both joy and religion in the task.

Familiar faces

Standing alone, these are two wonderful, incredibly well-kept examples of the best, most efficient and most durable cars that Mercedes had to offer in the 1980s; arguably a peak performance and production era for the hallowed brand. They drive tremendously and perform as intended 100 per cent of the time; a terrific testament to what obsessive ownership can gift you in the form of a classic Benz (or two). Even after sitting idle for months in our warehouse, both cars fired up forcefully, immediately and authoritatively; ready and waiting to be driven and enjoyed again, as before.

Yes, alone they are great cars. But combined with the 1,200 pages of detailed and specific history that accompany them, these Mercedes become something much more – they become familiar.

I've had the pleasure of enjoying these twins for several at this point and, after toiling through the history of their prior ownership, in excruciating detail, I truly feel like I've known them forever. By example, I now know that, thanks to a handwritten note I found from Milton circa 2002, the 'Parking brake engaged' light in the gauge cluster sometimes doesn't turn off even though the brake has been fully released. But thanks to his note, I know that all I must do is push up on the pedal from underneath with my toe and the connection is made, so the light goes away.

So too, with these records, these histories, a connection is made. And indeed, that to me is the entire point of hunting for, obsessing over, collecting, cleaning and restoring these oddball older Mercedes. It's about making a connection – a connection between man and machine, between owner and car, and between the enthusiasts comprising a community that shares similar predilections for their inherent, incredibly German curiosities.

So, to Milton and all the similar-such owners gripped in the throes of a torrid love affair with their old, oft-broken Mercedes – regardless of value, collectability, credence or condition – we salute you and encourage continuance of the tradition of care and curation that we all know they, and we, deserve. Just be sure to get a receipt.

"Combined with the 1,200 pages of detailed and specific history that accompany them, these Mercedes become something much more"

▷ 300SD came from same person as 300TD.

▽ Both proudly wear high-mile award badges.

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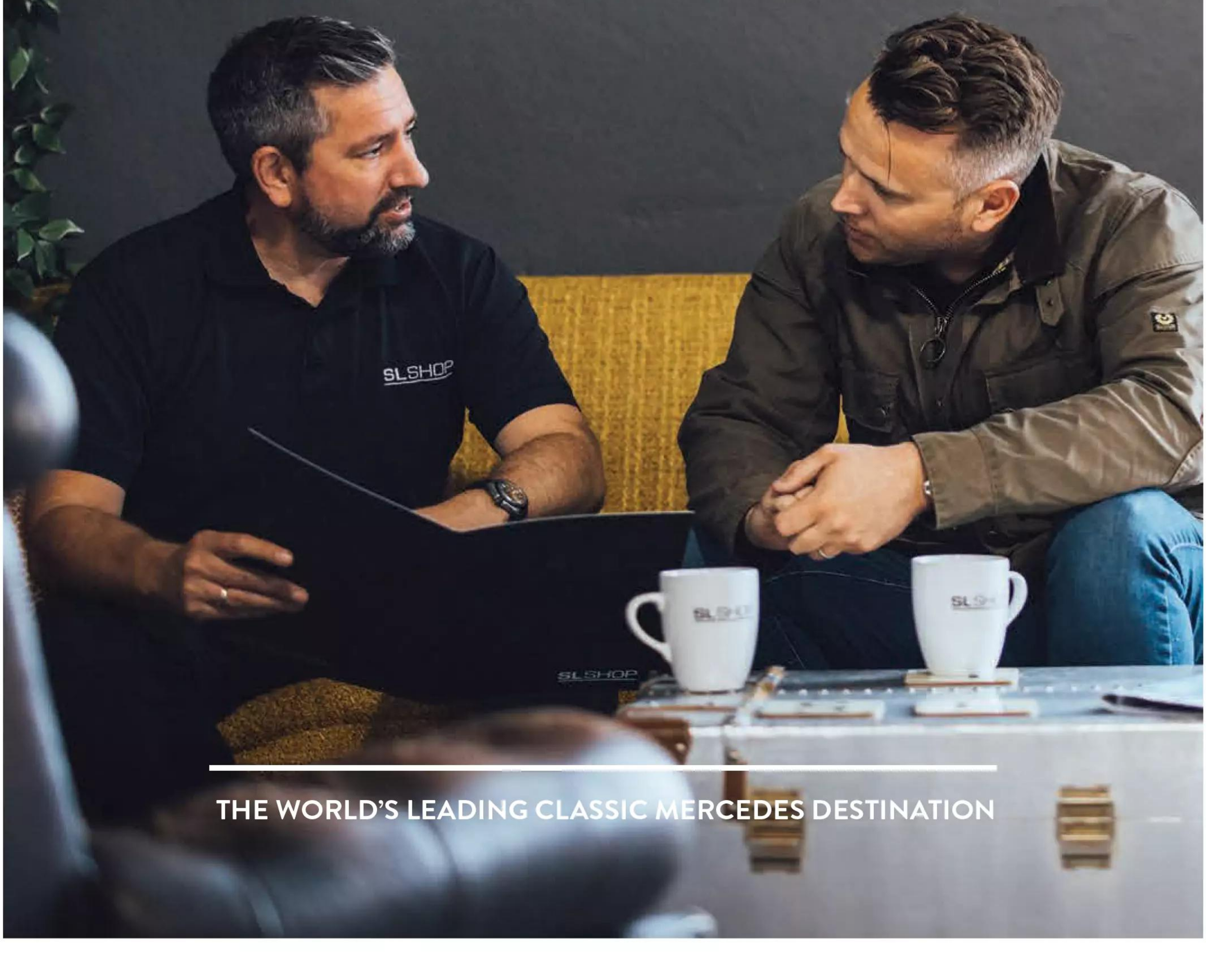


THE WORLD'S LEADING CLASSIC MERCEDES DESTINATION

WORDS **IAN KUAH** IMAGES **NINO HAMET AT L'ART DE L'AUTOMOBILE**

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Bulletproof to B4 rating and packing unique Brabus upgrades, this 2002 S500 is not your average limousine

The first time I visited Brabus in 1984, founder Bodo Buschmann and I fast became friends. Innovation was clearly the name of the game with this automotive titan, and my subsequent visits to Bottrop became something of a pilgrimage. Bodo sadly passed away in April 2018 but, ever the visionary, he had prepared his son Constantin to take the reins.

During one of my visits to Brabus in the early 2000s, I was shown a G-Wagen undergoing significant custom interior work for a wealthy Russian client. These were the heady years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when money for property and luxury goods had begun to flow across the borders from the newly minted Russian Federation like there was no tomorrow.

Brabus even took on a dedicated Russian salesman at its Bottrop HQ. The past owner of a high-end bar in Moscow, Peter the salesman knew how to handle wealthy Russians, many of whom were his old clients or friends. What made this Russia-bound G-Wagen stand out from the others in Brabus' assembly area was its NATO Level B6/7 armouring, which I instantly recognised by the thickness of the bulletproof glazing, the sheer weight of the armoured doors, and the runflat tyres.

B6/7, by the way, is the NATO armouring standard that describes protection up to Soviet 7.62 x 39mm (Level 6) and NATO 7.62 x 51mm (Level 7) hard core rounds as fired by assault rifles or light machine guns. Resistance to more powerful armour piercing rounds takes you into the world of Levels 8, 9 and 10.

The VPAM standard was introduced in 2009 to more thoroughly describe various levels of vehicle armouring. The VPAM scale runs from 1 to 14, with 1 to 5 being soft armour, and 6 to 14 being hard armour. In order to qualify for a particular category, the armour on test must withstand three hits, spaced 120mm (4.7 inches) apart, of the designated ammunition with no more than 25mm (0.98 inches) of back-face deformation.

VPAM testing is more rigorous compared to the previous B-rating, which was actually a material test. The VR test, on the other hand, is carried out on the whole vehicle, with shots fired at the doors, bonnet and boot, as well as their frames and panel gaps, behind which it is essential to have overlapping protection so that rounds cannot slip through the gaps. Areas behind the headlights, steering column, air conditioning, door locks and so on must be protected too, as pipes and wiring run through gaps in the firewall make the cabin potentially ▷

"Vehicle armouring is a very specialised field that requires expert knowledge"

MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG

△ Factory built S-Class (220-series) and E-Class (210-series) special protection models undergoing ballistics and explosive tests.

▷ vulnerable to a lucky (or unlucky) bullet.

NATO Level B6/7 is now referred to as VPAM VR6/7, while B4 is now VR4. But as the Brabus S500 L Guard B4 pictured here was made in 2002, we shall stick with its original B4 designation that denotes protection against powerful handgun rounds like the .357 Magnum and .44 Magnum. Thus, B4 is more than adequate to resist the ubiquitous 9mm Parabellum ammunition fired by many handguns, as well as iconic sub-machine guns like the Israeli-made Uzi 9mm and Heckler & Koch MP5 used by the SAS, which fall under the VPAM VR2/3 category.

While Brabus has always been adept at upgrading engines, drivetrains, chassis, bodywork and interiors to the highest possible standards, vehicle armouring is a very specialised field that requires expert knowledge of ballistics, materials that can resist various projectiles and explosives, and the knowhow to apply all this to a production vehicle in an unobtrusive way.

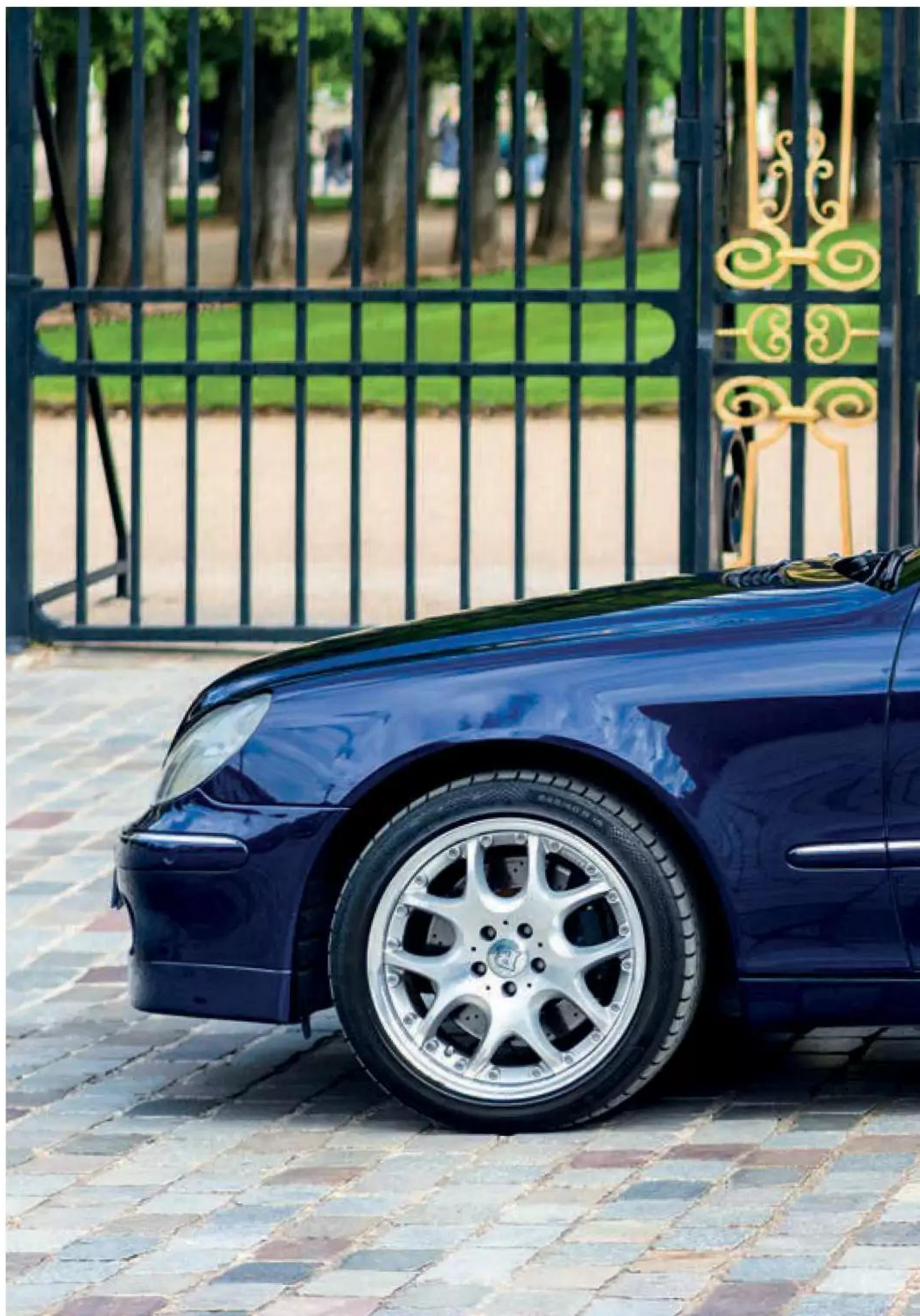
"B4 denotes protection against powerful handgun rounds like the .357 Magnum and .44 Magnum"

It is no surprise that Mercedes-Benz itself does it best on its vehicles, and the Mercedes-Benz Guard division located at the Sindelfingen factory supplies base armoured vehicles to Brabus. The reason that an M-B Guard car will always be better than an aftermarket conversion, which takes a standard car to pieces to install armouring, is that it was designed and built that way from day one by the factory.

More than that, the extra 1,000kg-plus in the case of a Level B6/7 armoured S-Class or G-Wagen, has to be matched by upgraded suspension, brakes and careful recalibration to electronically governed safety systems like the ABS and ESP to optimise them for the extra weight and the different weight distribution of the vehicle.

As the significant extra weight blunts performance and handling, these cars are based on the V8 and V12 models in the S-Class range. The B4 level of protection offered for the E-Class and S-Class models adds around 300 to 400kg by dint of much lighter armouring materials such as thinner

▽ Brabus' V8 upgrade raises power to 331bhp.



◁ 59,000km equates to about 36,000 miles.

▷ Mystic Blue colour coding inside this S500.

◁ The height of in-car tech during the 90s.

bulletproof glass, and ballistic Kevlar and steel plates compared to the B6/7 standard vehicles.

As this is about the weight of a full passenger load, the ride and handling of a B4 car is not adversely affected with its more modest chassis upgrades. Certainly, the W212 E-Class B4 test car I drove when it was a current model felt pretty normal on familiar country roads around Malmsheim near Stuttgart.

For enthusiasts familiar with Mercedes-Benz order codes,

▽ The Guard weighs 400kg more than stock.

Level B4 protection is Code 'Z04', while 'Z06' means B6 level protection, and 'Z07' is protection Level B7. All three were offered from April 1997 on the 140-series S-Class.

This particular Brabus S500 L B4 was built for a wealthy client who felt his life might be at risk from pistol-toting carjackers and local thugs. A very high-spec car with a long list of factory options beyond the Z04 Level B4 armouring, it also has the M-B Guard Special Protection Pack (Code 979) that was introduced in November 1978 under the description of 'Safety Version'. As the box for Code 247 – Electric adjustment of the front seat from the rear – was ticked, this car was clearly meant to be chauffeur-driven. ▷

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SPECIALIST **CARS**

△ **Note the rear facing air vent on the C-pillars.**

▷ **These could be the best seats in the house...**

"The dashboard, doors and front seats are covered in blue Alcantara colour-coded to the Mystic Blue paintwork"

▷ The limousines of politicians and wealthy entrepreneurs tend to come in sober colours like black or dark blue. However, the owner of this S-Class was clearly quite flamboyant and dipped into Mercedes' designo range for the lovely Mystic Blue hue. The base car was delivered to Brabus for the fitment of its front spoiler with built-in auxiliary lights, side skirts and rear valance with cutouts for the four outlets of the sports exhaust system. To maintain the best ride quality, the owner skipped the popular Brabus 19-inch wheels, opting instead for Monoblock V modular alloys in 8.5J and 9.5Jx 18-inch sizes, shod with 245/40ZR18 and 275/35ZR18 Continental rubber.

To at least partially make up for the extra weight of the B4 protection, the owner had Brabus install its B11 power kit for the five-litre M113 V8 motor. This consists of a pair of high-lift camshafts, uprated valve springs, free-flow, 200-cell metal catalytic convertors and a remapped ECU that lifts power by around 10 per cent from the standard 302bhp to 331bhp.

As the rear compartment was an important place for the owner to rest or work on the move, money was spent making the interior as plush as possible. Some people simply love the ▷

▽ **Four-pipe Brabus exhaust arrangement.**

▷ look and feel of soft hides, and Brabus made a name for itself back in the 1980s with its special Bio-Mastic leather, tanned in an eco-friendly process without any polluting chemicals.

Brabus adopted Alcantara as an additional cabin upholstery material in the 1990s, initially for dashboard tops to reduce reflections, but also for seat and door centre panels. While the combination of leather and Alcantara is common in Brabus cars today, covering whole seats with the man-made, suede-like material was a relative rarity a quarter of a century ago.

That, however, is what the owner of this car wanted, so the dashboard top roll, door inserts and front seats are covered in blue Alcantara colour-coded to the Mystic Blue paintwork. Interestingly, the rear seats have Alcantara centre panels that help to secure occupants in bends, but their outer panels are finished in soft blue leather to match the door top rolls, door pulls/armrests and dashboard lower roll, all of which visually benefit from double stitching. Brabus also made the elasticated map pockets behind the front seats from soft blue leather.

△ This S-Class V8 was priced at around £46,800.

The wood inserts for the steering wheel, centre console, doors and the rear air vent surrounds are standard Mercedes-Benz burr walnut veneer, and the mobile phone in the centre console is the period factory order Nokia unit.

Every now and then a unique car that was someone's idea of perfection comes up for sale, bringing a piece of automotive history under the spotlight. This Mercedes-Benz S500 Guard with its designo paint, Brabus styling, engine upgrade and one-off interior is certainly such a car. However, the reason behind the need for M-B Guard B4 protection is a whole different story, and apart from the owner and his family, will likely remain known only to the chauffeur who shared over 59,000km (36,000 miles) of adventures with their boss.

Thank you to L'art de l'automobile in Paris, France for its help with this feature ***Web*** *lartdelautomobile.com; this S500 L Guard was priced at €54,900 (£46,800) at the time of publication*

Just the facts

Standard S500 Guard special protection model B4 (V220)

Engine M113 4,966cc V8 **Power** 302bhp@5,600rpm **Torque** 339lb ft@2,700-4,200rpm **Transmission** 5-speed auto, rwd **Weight** 2,275kg

0-62mph N/A **Top speed** 130mph **Years produced** 2000-2002 **Number built** N/A

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a standard, pre-facelift 2002 S500 Guard; the car pictured is equipped with a Brabus B11 power kit, raising output to 331bhp/336ps

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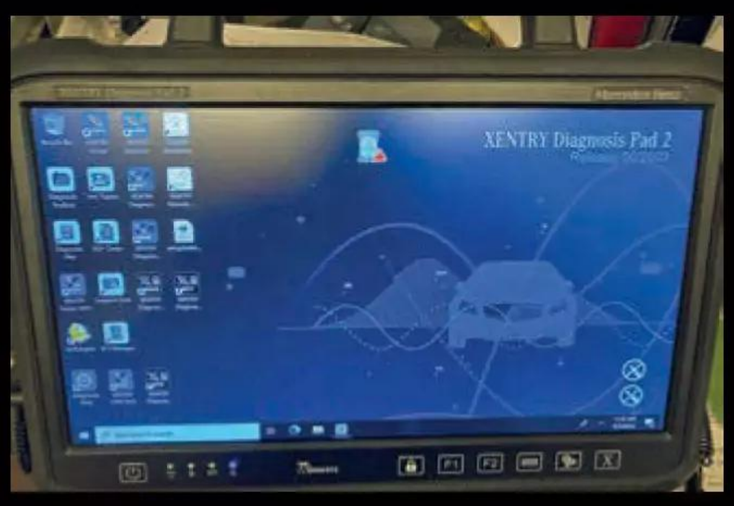

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LOST AND FOUND

Following on from the previous feature, we now turn our attention to bulletproof Mercedes manufactured during the 1930s and 40s with help from an impossibly rare 540K Aktion P (Panzer) saloon discovered hiding in a barn in Estonia during the 1990s

WORDS **JOHN J. O'LEARY IV**
IMAGES COURTESY OF **JOHN J. O'LEARY IV, RICHARD G. REUTER & BONHAMS | CARS**

Since the end of World War II, the surviving armoured and supercharged Mercedes-Benz cars of the Third Reich have been scattered across the globe. However, their rarity has made them worth more than some artwork by Picasso, Warhol, Van Gogh or Gustav Klimt. These mysterious and controversial automobiles are often glossed over in historical accounts but usually have a fascinating story to tell.

This remnant of the past (chassis 408377) is a 1939 Mercedes-Benz 540K Aktion P (Panzer) armoured saloon and speaks through documents, photographs and first-hand accounts from Richard Reuter and Dick Fritz. Reuter, a third-generation car restorer from Danbury, Connecticut, and former President of Reuter's Coach Works could tell immediately if any rusty old jalopy had a future. Fritz ran AmeriSpec Corporation in Danbury, Connecticut, which specialised in the importation of Ferraris for use on roads in the United States.

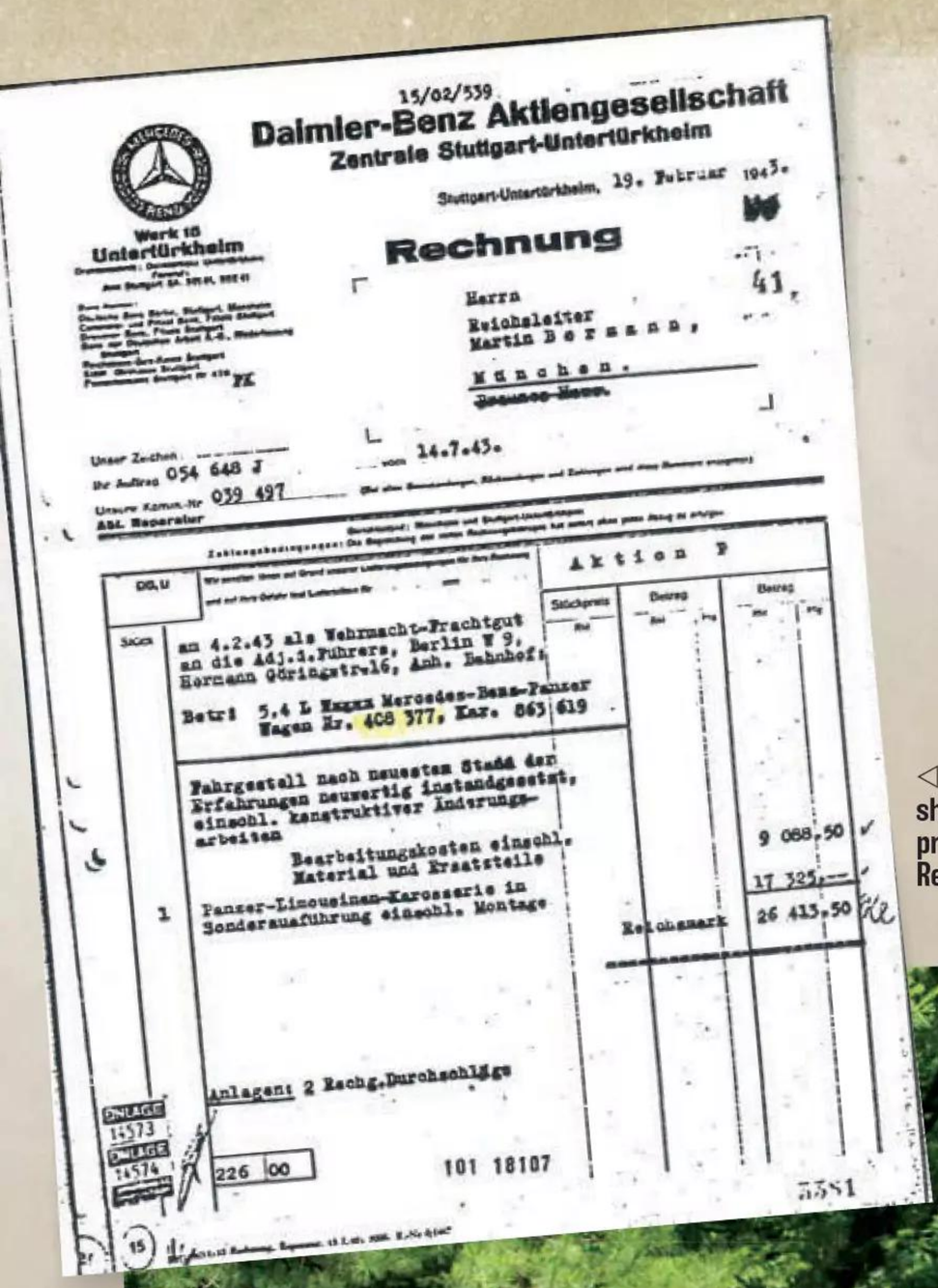
Until 1992, only one Aktion P (chassis 408417) was known to have survived World War II and it resides in the National Technical Museum in Prague. You can see this Aktion P in the film *Schindler's List*. The affable Peter Korsell picked up the trail of another survivor, chassis 408377. During the spring of 1992, he walked into a bar in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia and struck up a conversation with Heike Biltse. Heike told Peter he knew a man who owned a very "unique" Mercedes-Benz from World War II. Peter would be directed into the countryside of Tallinn and later he would lead three Americans to a run-down barn that contained the holy grail of Mercedes-Benz: a 540K Aktion P armoured car.

Meanwhile, back in the United States, Jennie Kiser who is based in Crescent, Oklahoma, was placing an ad that read, 'Wanted: any pre-1975 Mercedes-Benz' in Hemmings Motor News. Peter contacted Jennie on April 28 1992 by telephone. "I remember when I answered that the reception was extremely scratchy," explains Jennie. "The voice said, 'You won't believe what kind of car I have heard about over here!' I knew it was Peter by his accent and he just laughed. When he told me what kind of car it was, I replied, 'Are you sure?' Peter said that he had been told the car was hidden behind a lot of trash and other

▷ L to R: Dick Fritz, Peter Korsell, Hindrek Kukk, Heike Biltse and Ben Blake.

> *"Until 1992, only one Aktion P (chassis #408417) was known to have survived World War II"*

stuff so no one would know it was there. The description he gave me according to my notes was, 'Found a 540K roadster in Russia, non-original engine, has fab steel roof on car'," Jennie confirms. She immediately offered the lead to Reuter and promised that she wouldn't go anywhere else with it until he passed on the car.



15/02/539

Daimler-Benz Aktiengesellschaft
Zentrale Stuttgart-Untertürkheim

Werk 10
Untertürkheim

Stuttgart-Untertürkheim, 19. Februar 1943.

Rechnung

Herrn
Reichsleiter
Martin Bormann,
München.

Unser Zeichen 054 648 J
Ihr Auftrag 039 497 vom 14.7.43.
Unsere Komm.-Nr
Abt. Wagenlager

Aktion P

Stück		Stückpreis RM	Betrag RM	Pfg	Betrag RM	Pfg
	am 4.2.43 als Wehrmacht-Frachtgut an die Adj.i.Führers, Berlin W 9, Hermann Göringstr.16, Anh. Bahnhof.					
	Betr: 5,4 L Wagen Mercedes-Benz-Panzer Wagen Nr. 408 377, Kar. 863 619					
	Fahrgestell nach neuesten Stadd der Erfahrungen neuwertig instandgesetzt, einschl. konstruktiver Änderungs-arbeiten		9 088,50	✓		
	Bearbeitungskosten einschl. Material und Ersatzteile		17 325,—	✓		
1	Panzer-Limousinen-Karosserie in Sonderausführung einschl. Montage		26 413,50		Reichsmark	

Anlagen: 2 Rechg.Durchschläge

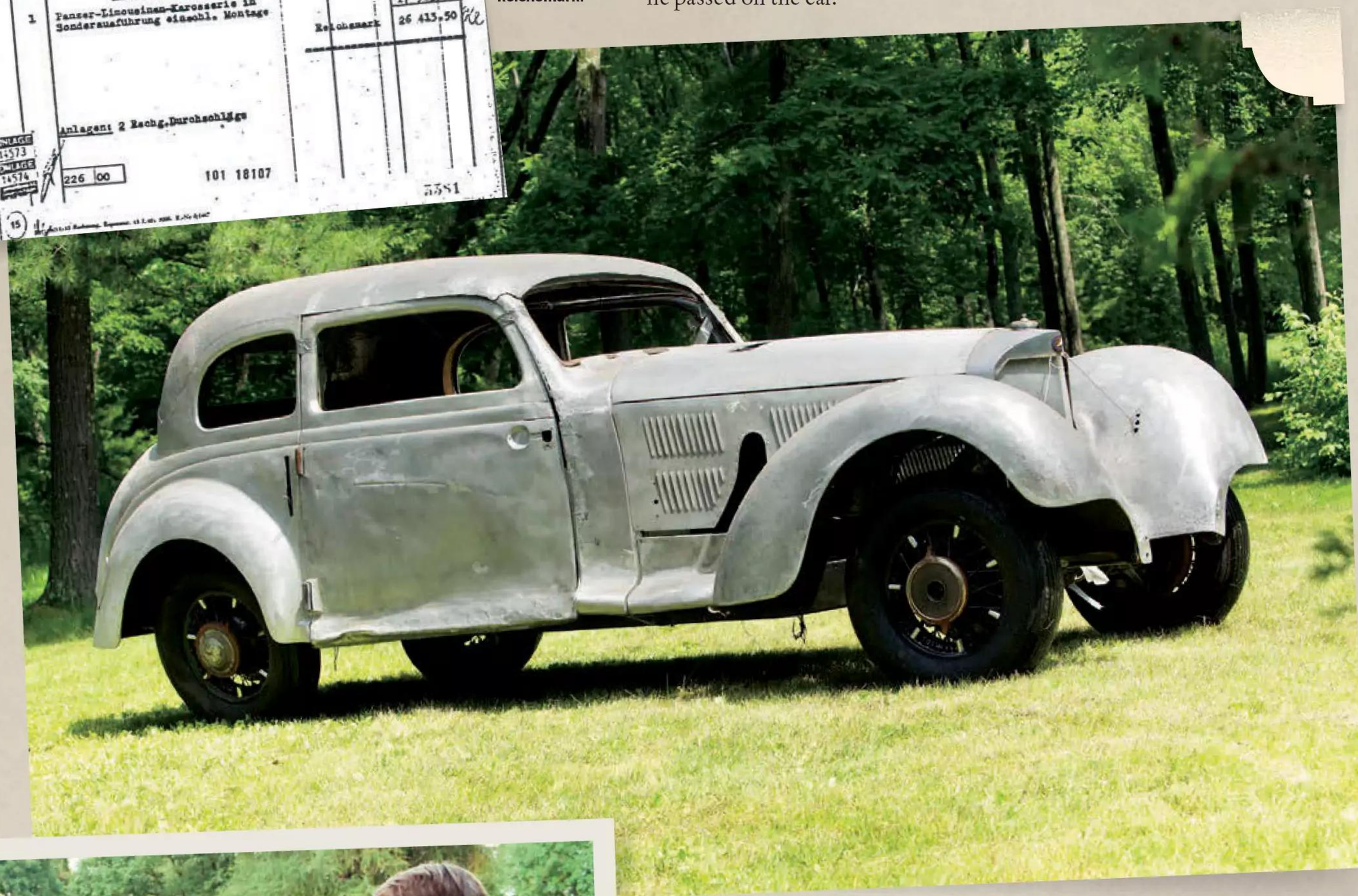
EINLAGE 14573
EINLAGE 14574

226 00

101 18107

5581

◁ **1943 invoice shows a vehicle price of 26,413 Reichsmark.**



Was this Mercedes legit? Rich Reuter recalls the phone conversation with Jennie Kiser. "She said she got a call from this guy in Estonia who had a Mercedes 540K". Reuter asked her, "What kind of 540K?". "It's bulletproof," Jennie replied. With that, Reuter's mind took off. Pulse rates zoomed when they discovered that only one of those 20 Aktion Ps built was known to have survived WWII. A second surviving car would be rare indeed.

Fritz relayed the story from Reuter to a third partner, a wealthy gentleman named Benson Blake, son of S. Prestley Blake, co-founder of the Friendly Ice Cream Corporation in Springfield, Massachusetts, who quickly offered to finance an expedition if he was included. On July 24 1992, the hunt began. "Wear your oldest clothes", Fritz said to Reuter. ▷

△ **The special 540K sold for £449,500 in a 2014 Bonhams auction event at Goodwood.**

△ Hindrek Kukk with chassis 408377 in Estonia.

▷ View of the barn in Estonia where the Aktion P was found.

▷ "And don't forget the Liquid Wrench". Usually, old clothes and a super-penetrant that frees rusted bolts, nuts and corroded parts fast from old cars would never make it onto even the most casual tourist's packing list. But these three were about to embark on the barn-finding adventure of a lifetime.

Over the phone, Peter was asked to get the chassis number for the 540K he had heard about. The number he finally gave was 408377, which coincided with one of the Aktion Ps that disappeared after the war. Peter was then asked other questions including the thickness of the window glass, but he did not have any answers. Frustrated, Peter told Fritz and Reuter, "You fly over to Estonia, and I'll show the car to you". Peter did not have to ask twice.

Journey of discovery

The three Americans were met at the train station by Peter, an Estonian named Erik Leino, who would later become the harbour master at the Tallinn Bekker Port, and Heike Biltse. Peter and Erik picked up the Americans in a 1979 Chevy Nova to make them a little more comfortable. The amount of cash they carried, in $100 bills, was a constant source of anxiety. There had been reports of tourists being killed for having as little as $200. "We each had $10,000 in cash strapped to our legs and in our jackets in case they searched our checked luggage," remembers Reuter.

They all piled into the Nova and drove deep into the Tallinn countryside. Hindrek Kukk, the car's owner, was not home so they spoke with his wife who pointed out the right barn. Loose boards and overgrowth covering the doorway to the barn were removed by Reuter. And then the Americans, having travelled all this way, found themselves face to face with a five-foot-high pile of clutter. It appeared as if someone had simply tossed in every broken bicycle, piece of scrap metal, debris, and every other piece of junk that someone saved during their life.

▽ Robert Reuter checks the body at AmeriSpec.

▷ Kukk and Reuter sitting in the original seats, Korsell behind.

"There is no car here," Reuter said glumly. Peter climbed over the junk pile and disappeared deep inside the barn. Finally, Reuter yelled at him. "Peter, is there a car in there?" Peter responded, 'Yes... The body of a car.'

"Beneath the mountain of rubble we could see the top left portion of a roof and a left fender," Reuter remembers. "We saw it was the right aluminium body type, so we all knew that we were on to something. The body was there, but in horrible condition. We looked inside and saw the armour plating so knew this was an Aktion P." No one asked where the engine was or enquired about the missing seats. They only wanted to know one thing: What was the chassis number, and would it correspond to Daimler-Benz's official Aktion P list?

The chassis was located up against the wall of the barn. In all the excitement they simply did not see it hiding in plain sight. Peter crawled down to get a closer look and locate the stamped factory plate on the chassis. Trying to wipe it off with his dirty hands to reveal the numbers, he read out loud: "Five-forty K. Four-oh-eight, three seven-seven." Jackpot.

That particular Mercedes-Benz Aktion P car had been assigned to the Reich Chancellery Motor Pool in Berlin, Germany. Eva Braun probably took her last ride in the '408377' Aktion P. The diary of Martin Bormann, Hitler's secretary, states Braun took a "courier car" from the chancellery to Hilter's Berlin bunker on March 7 1945,

"We each had $10,000 in cash strapped to our legs and in our jackets"

shortly before her suicide.

"We looked inside, and the armour plating was there on the floor nearby," Fritz explains. "I looked at Rich and our eyes said, 'Wow!' We tried to appear casual. It was explained that Hindrek had dismantled the car when his daughter was very young because the KGB, Estonian Old Car Club and various other groups heard rumours about the car and wanted it. After they dug out many of the parts of the Aktion P, the three Americans huddled back into the Nova to discuss their next move. "We wanted it," recounts Fritz. "We were prepared to pay $50,000, $100,000, $200,000 – whatever it took to own the car."

The job of wooing Hindrek fell to Blake, the wealthy, refined American who more than the others wanted the recognition that would come with this international ▷

◁ Special cars division at Sindelfingen.

△△ Heaps of parts ready to be revived.

△ Thin wheel with badge of Mercedes-Benz.

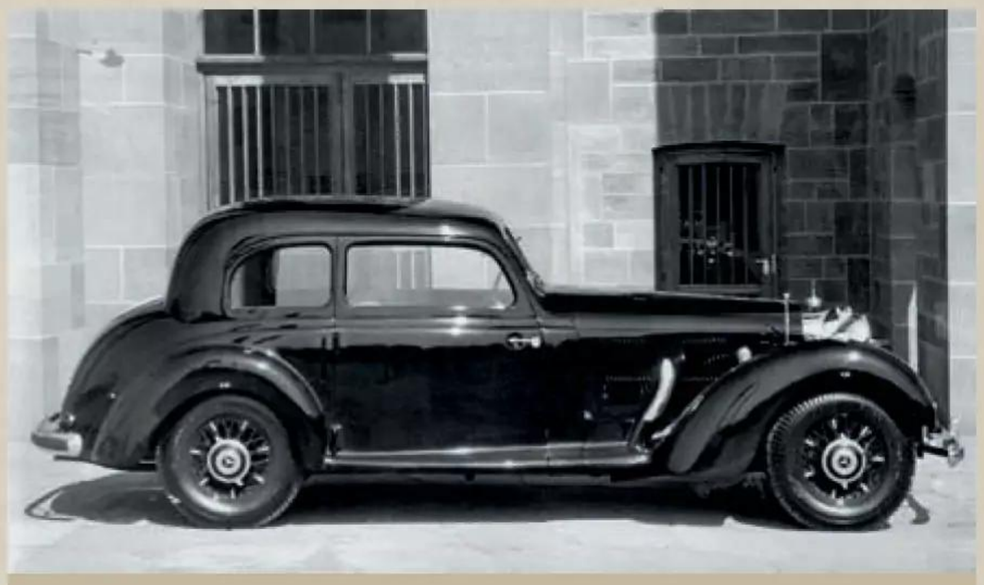
△ Hydraulic brakes with vacuum booster made by Bosch-Dewandre.

◁ Thickened glass designed to stop deadly projectiles.

▷ What remains of the simple yet classy dashboard cluster.

▷ discovery. They all felt that Hindrek had to be offered not just money, but something extraordinary. Then it struck them. "We were told Hindrek's daughter [Ullika] was an excellent student," Reuter explains. "What if we offered her an education in America? And along with that, and some cash, we would also throw in another car."

When Reuter went to bed Thursday night, he expected to be leaving empty handed. He and Fritz were awakened in the dark at 5:45am by an excited Blake. "Wake up, wake up! We got the car! We must give Hindrek an education for his daughter, the Mercedes wagon, and a lot of money." Blake said smiling. "Now, get up. You need to figure out how to get the Aktion P out of here!"



Background

In the summer of 1942, following the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the Reich Chancellery initiated 'Aktion P', which led to the production of 20 heavily armour-plated 540K four/five-passenger saloons. To fulfil this order, Daimler-Benz could only provide two 540K chassis so the Wehrmacht reclaimed 18 pre-war 540K's for conversion to armoured vehicles.

The factory record indicates that chassis #408377 was stripped of its original body and sent from Untertürkheim to Sindelfingen on August 15 1942, for mounting of the armored body. Page number 2,672 of the Daimler-Benz Kommissionsbuch records this as well. The whole procedure is covered by Daimler-Benz invoice number "039497" dated February 19 1943.

High risk

The obstacles to getting the car out of Estonia seemed overwhelming. The customs tariff on the car needed to be determined to get the car back legally. Fritz called Finland and arranged for two planes. "The problem," Fritz explains, "was that they were not big planes, so we got the cargo bay measurements and figured we could get the car in the plane if we cut off the roof."

By now, they believed that everybody in Estonia knew about the car and the 'rich Americans' snooping around. It was not a far-fetched possibility that the Russian mafia could foil their plans and take the car by force. Or they could have been taken for ransom to extort a huge payment, or something worse. "I would not say we were nervous – I would say we were very nervous," recalls Reuter.

The plan was to quietly collect all the Aktion P parts over the weekend then on Monday afternoon bring in a rented flatbed truck to load up. Then set off in procession for Tartu airport and fly everything out under the cover of darkness. Suspicious of all the landline phones, they bought a $2,300 mobile phone. "There was a guy in the motel we thought was mafia," Fritz recalls, "and we didn't want to risk using their phone line."

Meanwhile, Blake took the phone and a new fax machine to the lobby of the Peoleo motel, and then called the headmaster of Cushing Academy, seeking to enrol Hindrek's daughter Ullika immediately and faxed the girl's school records. The school had accepted a lot of Blake money, and it responded by finding her a place in the New England prep school.

On Saturday, Reuter and Fritz, using tin snips, gingerly cut off the car's roof along an existing weld seem. The engine block was dragged out and the interior was brought over from storage at Hindrek's mother's house. Hundreds of parts

▷▷ One intake and one exhaust valve for the M24 II straight-eight; up to 178bhp.

◁ The seats were 76 years old when this picture was taken.

"The obstacles to getting the car out of Estonia seemed overwhelming"

and body panels and armour plates were all boxed up. After several delays, they finally departed Monday evening with Hindrek in the flatbed with the driver while Fritz, Reuter and Blake were in Erik's orange postal van.

When they reached the rear entrance of Tartu airport, Fritz yelled, "I see the two Finnish planes!" Thankfully the pilots spoke English but said, "You're late and we have a problem. There is clearance for Russian air space but only until 11:30pm." That meant there was just over an hour to load everything and ensure the weight was distributed equally between the two planes. Reuter asked the pilot how they would know if the weight was right, and the pilot replied, "Well, if I take off and you are in the plane behind me and I crash, you know your plane will make it..."

By the 11th hour, the planes were finally loaded. Fritz distributed a lot of American currency to Peter to pay Erik and the others who helped load the truck and planes. The three Americans piled into the cargo bay of the Beechcraft King aircraft. The plane lifted off and just an hour later they were in Helsinki, Finland. Reuter opened a Koff beer provided by the Finnish pilot, took a deep swallow, then stated, "This beer tastes really good."

The next day, they paid $7,000 to Finnair to ship the three of them and the Aktion P by 747 to JFK airport in New York. The Aktion P chassis, body and parts were then shipped on to AmeriSpec in Danbury, Connecticut. "The moment we flew out made the whole thing worth it to me," smiles Richard Reuter. "It was just an incredible adventure."

The armoured 540K sat alone in Connecticut for over 20 years before being sold in a Bonhams auction for $770,603 (the equivalent of £449,500) including buyer's premium.

▽ Two planes flew car parts to Finland.

BUILT TO CRUISE

We've been tracking the restoration of a rare, right-hand-drive Mercedes-Benz 220S Cabriolet based just outside of Cape Town in South Africa. After a long wait, we finally get the keys and take the revived droptop on its maiden sunset cruise

WORDS **WILHELM LUTJEHARMS** IMAGES **PEET MOCKE**

Several countries and companies set the retirement age at 65. Being 65 years old, this 1959 Mercedes-Benz 220S Cabriolet, also lovingly called a Ponton, has just arrived at this milestone. However, unlike our mere mortal and ever-aging human bodies, it has just received its second lease on life and, in spectacular fashion, is ready for the next 60-odd years on the road.

As motoring enthusiasts, we can easily get carried away by cars – by their beauty, performance, and simply by the experience of driving them. But today, other road users and pedestrians are just as impressed with the car I am driving as I am.

After only a few minutes on the road, there has already been much horn pressing, finger pointing and waving coming our way – mostly from middle-aged and older citizens, driving everything from big SUVs to small, old city cars. People can't seem to help themselves when they see this Mercedes, the happiness we spread as we drive along manifesting in a combination of smiles and many thumbs-up.

Through all the waves, I'm trying to remind myself that the indicator is the chrome circle in the middle of the steering wheel – perfectly positioned but not self-cancelling, so you need to turn it back after every use. It's just another quirky element that makes driving these cars engaging and interesting.

"The 220S Cabriolet is a car you can lose yourself in"

The 220S was handed to me with the roof neatly folded away under its new cover. It is a perfect afternoon; after weeks of rain, the fresh air and sunlight is more than welcome. I have absolutely no inclination to raise the roof, even though it is still a tad cold.

But first, some history on this specific car. The current custodian shows me its very first registration document from when it was bought in the UK. Though very fragile, it reveals some historic details from the car's earliest years. In 2015, the car was bought in the UK by CMC (Classic Motor Company), based outside Cape Town in South Africa. ▷

Classic Mercedes motoring doesn't get much better...

▷ It was imported into South Africa, also a right-hand drive market, the following year.

"The car caught our eye because it was a right-hand drive model and not many come up for sale," CMC explains. "It falls within our scope of work as we also have a 220SE Cabriolet currently undergoing restoration, and we are known for our work on other classic Mercedes-Benz. We decided to paint the Ponton in these period-correct, two-tone Mercedes-Benz colours [DB356G light blue and DB602 ivory], although it left the factory in grey [DB125]."

The colour choice for this car, combined with the interior and wood veneer, leaves an extremely classy and eye-catching impression. Restoring an entire car is never an easy task, and in this case it took even longer thanks to the spanner in the works that was the pandemic.

"Even though the Ponton wasn't running when we bought it, the biggest challenge during the restoration process was getting the chromework done perfectly," says CMC. "We decided to outsource the upholstery work to Europe since we don't have the correct leather locally, and to import the leather is a real challenge. We'd rather send off the seat frames and have them returned perfectly upholstered in the correct material

with the correct patterns and stitching."

There is still a short list of finishing touches to be done, but after a couple of years of waiting, the opportunity to take the Ponton on its maiden sunset cruise was impossible to resist. Without any fixed numberplates, the classic design is even purer. The soft, two-tone colours with the cream interior further invite you into the cabin. The wood veneer offers a welcoming, darker contrast, while the newly upholstered seats are wide and comfortable, with that typical Mercedes-Benz firmness.

The 220S production started in July of 1956 and ran until October of 1959. The Coupe and Cabriolet models retailed for a significant 70 per cent more than the Saloon. These two-door variants were also built in very small numbers. Combining both body styles and including left- and right-hand drive versions, only 297 were manufactured in 1956, 1,066 in 1957, 1,280 in 1958, and 786 in 1959. These are very low numbers, especially when compared to the 190SL's 25,881-unit production run!

"The opportunity to take the Ponton on its maiden sunset cruise was impossible to resist"

These numbers quickly slip out of my mind as we turn onto the R44, also known as Clarence Drive. It is a smooth stretch of tarmac that hugs the False Bay coastline, 36 miles from Cape Town. Clarence Drive clings to the mountainside and curves with it, a black ribbon running parallel and close to the coast. It is a favorite for sports car ▷

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▷ enthusiasts, cyclists, motorcycle riders, and classic car owners. Thankfully, at the end of a weekday, it is fairly quiet. With the ocean on one side and, in certain stretches, a sheer rock face on the other, along with the smooth thrum from the six-cylinder M180 III engine echoing off the rocks, these all contribute to a wonderfully appealing and relaxing drive.

What impresses during the first few minutes of driving the 220S is its twin-carb engine. This Ponton is not slow. The 105bhp and 127lb ft (fuel injected 220SE: 113bhp/140lb ft) are not significant numbers, but not only can you keep up with modern day traffic, you can pass it quite effortlessly. The 220S easily climbs past 60mph up to 70mph, leaving me in no doubt about the claimed 99mph top speed.

"What impresses during the first few minutes of driving the 220S is its twin-carb engine"

△ **The twin-Solex-32-carb M180 unit produced 99bhp/119lb ft until 08.1957 when output increased to 105bhp/127lb ft.**

The other beautiful aspect of the engine is its torque delivery. Though there is no rev counter in the car, even in fourth gear at low speeds you can flex your right foot and the Ponton will start picking up speed. This is obviously the case in the lower gears as well, the relaxed engine really proving an unexpected highlight of this Mercedes, perfectly suited to a four-seater convertible.

While this restored 220S Cabriolet undoubtedly looks beautiful and classy, I can honestly say the time and effort that went into tuning the twin-carb straight-six has ensured its drive equals the looks. Even the slightest throttle input stirs near immediate action from the engine, which is rarely the ▷

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz 220S Cabriolet (W180)

Engine M180 2,195cc 6-cyl **Power** 105bhp@5,200rpm **Torque** 127lb ft@3,500rpm **Transmission** 4-speed manual, rwd **Weight** 1,385kg

0-62mph 17.0sec **Top speed** 99mph **Fuel consumption** 26.4mpg **Years produced** 1956-1959 **Number built** 2,178

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a 1959 car as pictured; fuel consumption determined at 3/4 of top speed (not more than 68mph/110kph) plus 10 per cent

▷ case with such old cars, in my experience. The clutch also has an early bite point and the 220S feels much more alive than I anticipated.

Needless to say, this drophead Mercedes rides very comfortably. Don't be too enthusiastic through the corners though as you will experience body roll, and it becomes clear that this type of enthusiastic driving is not what the suspension (double-wishbone front and single-joint swing axle rear) designers intended. This one is a composed, relaxed sunset cruiser.

The column-mounted gearshift takes some getting used to, however. First is towards you and up, and second down, with third and fourth towards the dashboard. You can't rush the gears, and to get into third you need to pause a moment before it slips in. The Bakelite steering wheel is large, providing good leverage when turning, especially at parking speeds. Once in motion, the thin-rimmed wheel requires much less effort to steer the car into a corner.

As mentioned, there is body roll, and combined with the high-profile tyres there is a noticeable delay between turning the steering wheel and the car's response, which is in-keeping with the generally soft and comfortable driving experience. The 220S Cabriolet is a car you can lose yourself in, and is perfect for taking your partner along to enjoy the sunset as the day fades away.

The revived Ponton handles its maiden sunset cruise with classic aplomb, and I'm sure this is what its designers and engineers had in mind over 60 years ago.

I might be crucified for writing this, but if a 190SL was parked next to the Ponton Cabriolet and I had to make a choice, it would be the latter I step towards. The 190SL might be smaller and marginally sportier (it is much lighter), but the Ponton Cabriolet is as fast, more spacious, more practical, and just as stylish and elegant to these eyes. Then there is also the fact that these cars are very rare, even more so in right-hand-drive form, with the cherry on top being that smooth and responsive straight-six engine. This 220S's custodian is in for a treat in the coming years.

△ Vehicle taxation document with entries from the 1960s.

△ The speedo needle moves horizontally from left to right.

"People can't seem to help themselves when they see this old Mercedes"

Peter Jarvis

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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

Mercedes sports 300SL 1988/9 finished in astral silver, with navy blue interior and matching soft top, complete with hard top, rear seats, over mats, tinted glass, stereo system, light up vanity mirrors abs, alloys, power windows, automatic, power steering, spare wheel never used, complete with all tools, only one previous owner, only 23,000 miles from new, with excellent service history from new, new MOT by Mercedes and recent service, with tracker and immobilizer, garaged from new, just magnificent throughout. £59,750.

Mercedes 300SL Sports 1988/9 — £59,750

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

Mercedes Sports 1985 280SL — £27,750

Finished in unmarked gleaming signal red, with hard and soft tops, rear seats, headrests, overmats, stereo system, power windows, tinted glass, complete with all tools, auto, power steering, only 87,000 miles from new, all original paperwork from new. Absolutely first-class history, with only one previous owner, amazing condition, drives smoothly just like new, pampered and garaged from new, probably one of the finest available.

Mercedes Sports 280 SL 1981 with personal reg number — £27,500

Finished in brilliant smoke silver with, beige hide interior, hard and soft tops, headrests, light up vanity mirrors, expensive stereo system, power windows, tinted glass, air con, alloys, abs bakes, air bag, srs, power steering, automatic, complete with all tools, 49,500 miles, history garaged from new. This car is just breath taking.

Mercedes 560SL sports 1988 LHD — £44,750

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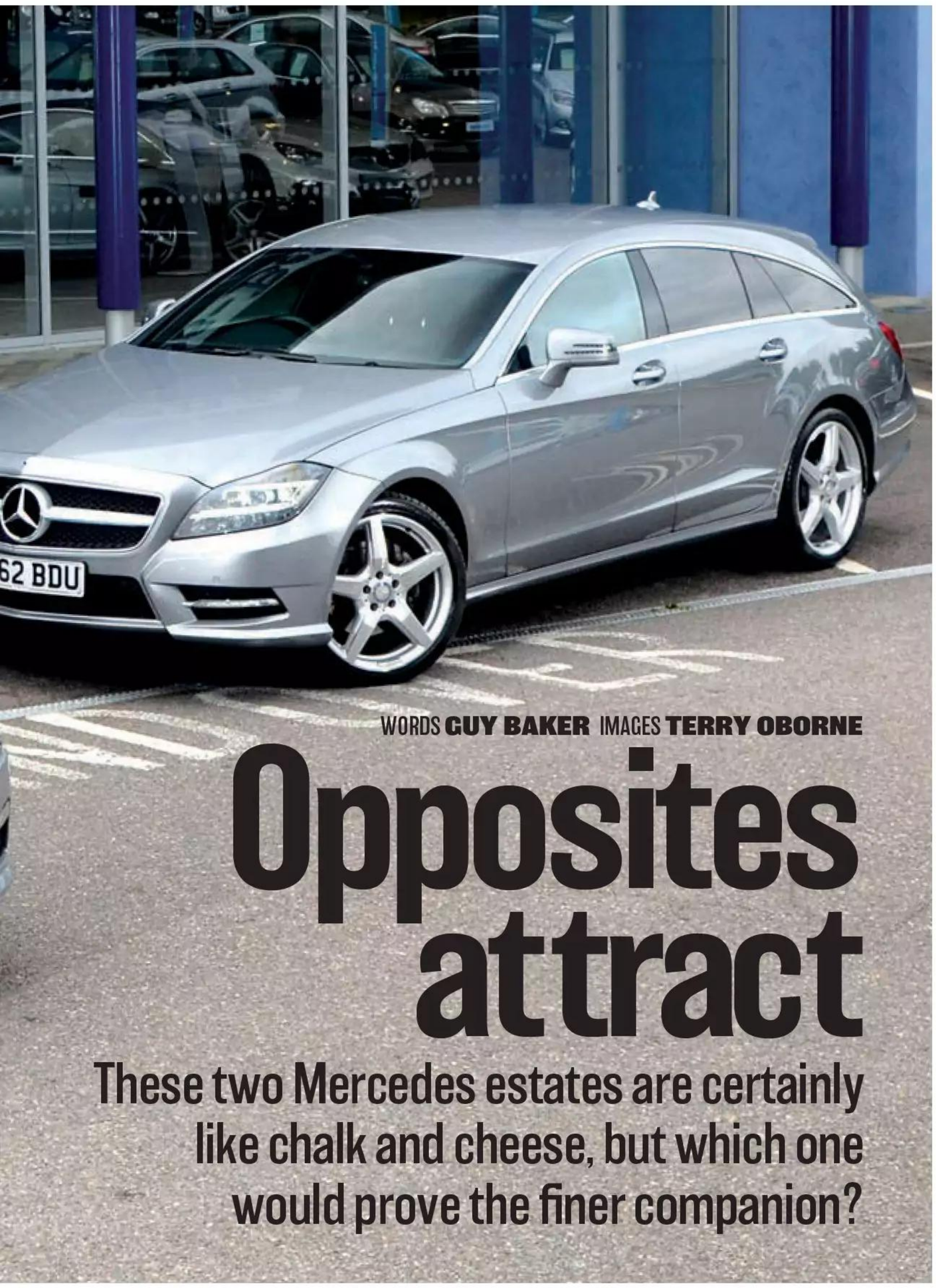
◁ Both the cars pictured wear 19-inch alloys.

△ The E63's large paddles have a satisfying feel.

Copious amounts of black ash wood trim make the CLS feel very classy and expensive.



WORDS **GUY BAKER** IMAGES **TERRY OBORNE**

Opposites attract

These two Mercedes estates are certainly like chalk and cheese, but which one would prove the finer companion?

During the early 2000s, many estate car manufacturers shifted their focus from solely practicality to include style and performance as well. This led to the emergence of a new wave of stylish and speed-oriented machines. Mercedes-Benz was very much at the forefront of this new approach, with the X218 CLS Shooting Brake and the S212 E63 AMG Estate being two of its most notable models.

A decade and a half later, those dashing estates have now mostly been replaced by SUVs and crossovers in manufacturers' model ranges, but these two striking Mercedes five-doors still possess plenty of appeal as used buys, with price tags substantially lower than they once were. In 2013, for example, both these cars would have set you back around £50,000, the CLS as a brand new model and the E63 AMG as a low-mileage Mercedes-Benz Approved Used buy.

But things have moved on, and their price ranges no longer overlap – the frugal CLS Estate is an £8,000 to £12,000 bargain, whilst the high-performance E63 AMG Estate has retained significantly better residuals with a decent example costing £17,000 to £32,000. But that's still a steal compared to the latest E63 Estate, which would set you back well over £80,000.

These two estates are certainly poles apart in many regards, but both can prove commendable used buys. So, which of these glamourous Mercedes estates offers the finest overall value?

> *"**Dashing** estates have now mostly been replaced by **SUVs** and **crossovers**"*

Neat AMG E-Select lever in the 518bhp wagon – and Comand Online is standard.

△ Big torque and economy from the turbocharged 250 CDI unit.

△ Epic pace and a super sound from the 5,461cc AMG V8.

Classic choice

In their heyday, these two talented Mercedes took the desirable estate car close to its natural limits, with the E63 AMG now a sure-fire future classic and the swoopingly-styled CLS infinitely more appealing than more mundanely formed turbodiesel estate rivals.

The charismatic X218 CLS Shooting Brake still turns heads today, with the 2011-2014 CLS250 CDI Shooting Brake model (which was rebadged Bluetec from 2014-2017) offering a near-perfect amalgam of style, practicality and economy.

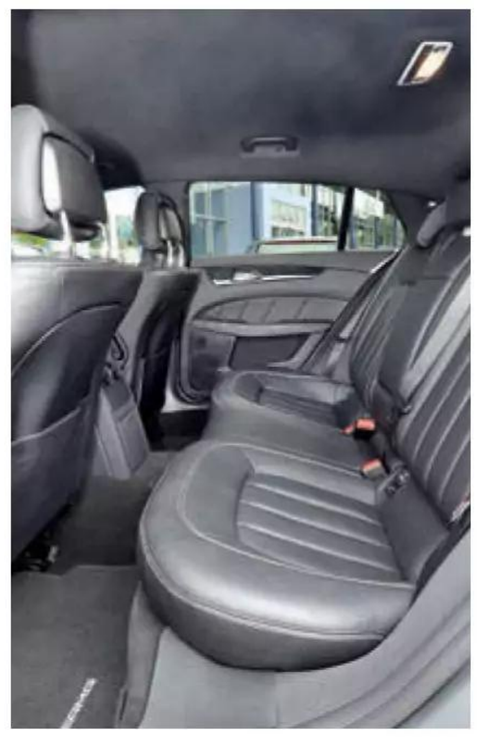
Mercedes' 2.1-litre four-cylinder biturbo powerplant (OM651) provides a perfectly capable 201bhp but a much more impressive 369lb ft of torque from just 1,600rpm. Combined with Mercedes' excellent seven-speed automatic transmission, performance always feels ample, even when laden, whilst an impressive 146mph top speed and sagacious 53.3mpg combined fuel consumption.

Original standard equipment on the CLS-Class included ▷

△ The CLS's boot can take 590 to 1,550 litres.

▽ A swoopy, sexy roof line for the CLS-Class.

▽ Sleek and elegant tail lights look ace.



△ Unlike the coupe, this CLS can seat five.

▽ Distinctive all LED headlamps look brilliant.

▷ Real leather is standard in the CLS wagon.

Match up

Model	Image and style	Driving experience	Buying and owning
CLS250 CDI Shooting Brake	8/10	7/10	8/10
E63 AMG Estate	8/10	9/10	7/10

▷ bi-xenon headlights, 18-inch alloy wheels, dual-zone automatic climate control, a power sunroof and satellite navigation – plus electronic stability control, active head restraints, and no less than 10 airbags.

Options included all-round Airmatic air suspension (rear air suspension was standard on the Shooting Brake) and a reversing camera, whilst a 2014 facelift introduced a redesigned front fascia with a new radiator grille and LED headlights – as well as a new steering wheel design and an eight-inch Comand display.

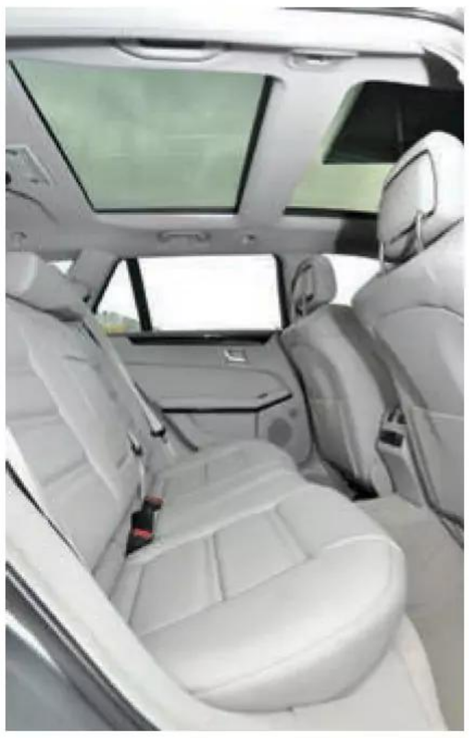
In contrast, the S212 E63 AMG Estate's styling is more sharp-edged – especially at the rear end – and from a distance is barely distinguishable from lesser models in the S212 range. Closer up, however, it's a different story, with discreet AMG touches everywhere plus quad exhaust pipes and a lower altogether more menacing stance.

Released in 2011 and boasting 518bhp from a 5.5-litre V8 biturbo AMG engine, the seven-speed E63's performance is utterly outstanding even by today's elevated standards. A hefty 516lb ft of torque is available all the way from 1,750rpm to 5,000rpm, imbuing this S212 with incredible acceleration – 0-62mph takes just 4.4 seconds. Not surprisingly, however, fuel economy is pretty low, with most owners struggling to better 28mpg.

A more powerful performance pack version was made available by Mercedes-AMG too – plus a 2013-2016 facelifted model. Both these cars came with 549bhp (which shaved a tenth of a second from the 0-62mph time) whilst the facelifted E63 AMG also claimed revised front air intakes, a new rear diffuser, full LED headlights and a new front grille. Air suspension was standard on all E63 models, and in October 2013 a 577bhp E63 AMG S model was introduced.

Ownership

Compared to the mighty E63 AMG, the CLS250 CDI Shooting Brake AMG Sport focuses on show rather than go, although as we



◁ Harder rear seats in the E63 AMG wagon.

▽ Pre-facelift front still looks the business.

△ AMG helm and leather feature in the E63 Estate.

▽ E63 has a wonderful, V8 soundtrack.

▽ E's upright D-pillars boost luggage space.

△ E63's boot swallows 695 to 1,950 litres.

said earlier – it' not bad in that regard. Its plush cabin unashamedly pampers the driver, with a curvaceous dashboard boasting deep-set retro-style dials, lavish stitched leather upholstery and plenty of wood trim. More glamorous than similar rivals, many of the materials used in the CLS feel expensive, even compared to those in the E63 AMG.

And the CLS's sweeping exterior styling is just as dramatic today as it was more than a decade ago. However, there is a small price to pay with the view from the driver's seat partly obscured by large wing mirrors, a high waistline and raked A-pillars. The load bay at 590/1,550 litres isn't quite as large at the E63's 695/1,950 litres, but for most owners the difference won't be significant.

Extremely comfortable even on rutted B-roads and claiming speed-sensitive Direct Steering, the CLS handles well with impressive grip and strong braking. And that efficient

"Rear air suspension was standard on the Shooting Brake"

diesel motor should enable you to return over 50mpg on longer motorway journeys. Around town, the X218 can be manoeuvred relatively easily in tight spaces too, and running costs aside are relatively low thanks to group 43 car insurance and a £190 a year road tax bill.

In comparison, the potent E63 AMG Estate sits in insurance group 46 and will set you back a whopping £710 a year in road tax! You'll also struggle to match the official combined fuel consumption of 28.3mpg. But in spite of similar estate proportions the E63 is way more involving to drive and delivers truly awesome performance.

The E63 is just as well equipped as the CLS wagon and equally comfortable (in Comfort mode at least), and with a larger boot is arguably a tad more practical too, but the main reason for buying an E63 AMG is that thrilling performance. The power delivery is furious, as you would expect from a Mercedes producing a minimum of 518bhp plus a wall of torque. And that power can be properly utilised – where conditions allow – thanks to the E63's bespoke sports suspension, communicative chassis and almost instant gear changes.

Surprisingly agile for such a large machine, the E63 AMG sounds awesome; the only problem you're likely to have will be keeping your licence – particularly if you've opted for ▷

▷ Automatic bootlid for both these wagons.

△ Supple air suspension at the rear of both these Mercs.

△ The E-Class Estate has a wider and lower boot opening.

▷ the optional AMG Performance Package Plus or an AMG S model.

Buying advice

When it comes to specs, both these estates were well equipped as standard, and first owners tended to be generous with the options tick list too, so almost every example is an individual. But it's worth noting that the Comand Online infotainment system was a £950 option on the CLS250 CDI, but standard on the E63 AMG.

You'll find more CLS Estates for sale than E63s, with roughly 55 per cent of them at dealerships rather than in private hands, and the vast majority have covered higher mileages than most E63s. However, the frugal CLS250 CDI Shooting Brake is an £8,000 to £12,000 buy, making it roughly half the price of a typical S212 E63 AMG Estate.

General wear and tear can be a real issue on the CLS, as so many have high mileages. Check the condition of brakes, suspension components and tyres and only consider X218s with a complete up-to-date service history. Watch out for any sign of oil leaks – cars built in 2014 could have had the wrong oil seal fitted between the timing chain tensioner and the engine, with affected cars needing a new seal fitted to prevent the problem. Inspect the high-pressure fuel lines for cracks and there was an emissions recall, so contact your local Mercedes-Benz dealer to check that remedial work has been carried out.

A few owners have reported problems with the fuel injectors on the OM651 diesel engine, as well as timing chain and timing chain tensioner issues, and coolant leaks and turbo problems are known. But most CLS250 CDIs have suffered very few problems. And that applies to the S212 E63 AMG too, with the M157 appearing to be a reliable engine, but it's not totally bulletproof…

A handful of E63s have developed a cold-start timing chain rattle, probably as a consequence of chain tensioners running dry. Fitting a non-return valve into an existing hole in the cylinder head can prevent this, and check that all the spark plugs are still working at full efficiency – they do need replacing as per the service schedule.

Rare coolant, Airmatic, and power steering leaks have also been reported on the E63, and replacement brake parts aren't cheap. E63s without the Performance Package (which included a differential lock) can benefit from fitting a Quaife LSD. Although private cars are cheaper, dealerships have around 65 per cent of all E63s and comeback-wise are a far safer proposition. A budget of £24,000 upwards buys a really nice example, but that's double the price of a similar age CLS250 CDI Shooting Brake.

So which estate makes the best buy? Both are well equipped and possess impressive carrying capacity and seem equally reliable, so it really comes down to whether you prize style, value and economy over performance and kudos. If you do then the CLS250 CDI Shooting Brake is the estate for you, if not then the E63 AMG wagon is the better choice. Just be aware of those running costs!

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz CLS250 CDI Shooting Brake (X218)

Engine OM651 2,143cc 4-cyl biturbo **Power** 201bhp@3,800rpm
Torque 369lb ft@1,600-1,800rpm **Transmission** 7-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,865kg
0-62mph 7.8sec **Top speed** 146mph **Fuel consumption** 53.3mpg
CO2 **emissions** 143g/km **Years produced** 2012-2014

Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG Estate (S212)

Engine M157 5,461cc V8 biturbo **Power** 518bhp@5,250-5,750rpm
Torque 516lb ft@1,750-5,000rpm **Transmission** 7-speed auto, RWD **Weight** 1,945kg
0-62mph 4.4sec **Top speed** 155mph **Fuel consumption** 28.3mpg
CO2 emissions 234g/km **Years produced** 2011-2013

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; fuel consumption according to NEDC combined; E63 AMG Estate's top speed electronically limited

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Model	Desc.	Batteries	Order Code	exc.VAT	inc.VAT
CCIW160	Cordless	2x 2AH LI-ION	060210658	£99.98	£119.98
CIR184LIP*	Cordless	2x 4AH LI-ION	060210619	£144.99	£173.99

* Auto Express Best Buy 2024

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TOUCH UP PAINT FACTORY

▷ Pricing for the new GT63 starts at £165,000 OTR.

WORDS **KYLE MOLYNEUX** IMAGES **MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

We get behind the wheel of AMG's new-generation GT63 Coupe in the UK to see how this old school V8 copes with our unique roadscape

Take two

"The GT feels much like an SL but even more 'switched on'"

The second-generation AMG GT is as close to being a technical tour de force as is possible in the automotive world without deploying the most cutting edge of drive systems. Namely, electric motors powered by a battery. In that regard, the C192, as it's internally codenamed, feels like something of a final hurrah for AMG's petrol-fuelled super sports cars before the zero-emissions brigade ushers these wonderful creations out the side door.

That said, the GT63's specification is otherwise as punchy as you'd hope given the £165,000 entry ticket. There's fully variable AMG Performance 4Matic+ all-wheel-drive that'll send ever more power rearward depending on how brave you're feeling with the ESP/TC settings. The new GT also boasts active aerodynamics at the front and rear including a patented carbon element in the underbody (in front of the engine), which lowers 40mm at 50mph to create a Venturi effect that pulls the nose closer to the road surface and reduces front axle lift.

AMG has also installed its Active Ride Control suspension complete with five links at every corner and hydraulic components that replace conventional anti-roll bars, increasing both comfort and tightening body control, with commensurate improvements to overall response. As standard, the C192 also features rear-wheel steering, a composite brake system, and an AMG Track Pace app for measuring G-forces and timing laps on various circuits around the globe. As you do.

And then there is the small matter of the GT63's powerplant. Greenies look away now, as under that tautly rippled bonnet is a four-litre, twin-turbocharged V8 engine (M178) assembled by a single pair of human hands, linked ▷

▷ C192 carries over the thick central tunnel.

▷ to a nine-speed AMG Speedshift MCT 9G transmission with wet clutch. There's no silent-running eco mode here; even with the EU's stricter noise regulations, the V8's cold start will still have the neighbours' curtains twitching, and its full-bore bellow in racier modes raises goosepimples from the surface of your forearms as reliably as ever.

Speaking of skin, the new GT really does have a lovely shape, those rear haunches far more impressive up close than they appear from 10m away. I'd also say designers have nailed the rear end of the C192, which is curvy, distinctive (check out those bubble brake lights), and suitably aggressive thanks to its well groomed 'butt moustache' with integrated twin-pipe smokers, and party piece rear spoiler which automatically raises at higher speeds.

▽ Stock brakes; ceramics are part of 'Ultimate'.

These are the exquisite dress details of a pleasingly exotic composite aluminium bodyshell, and yet it's the GT's rear cabin quarters that are arguably its most important detail. Yes, really! Sure, the driver is treated to an 11.9-inch touchscreen of the MBUX infotainment system, plus a sports seat with integrated headrest and a fabulously girthy AMG-spec helm (with infuriatingly dumb touchpads), but it's what lurks behind the front pews and beyond that really defines the C192 and separates it from its C190 predecessor.

AMG's latest sports star is now a 2+2 rather than a strict two-seater, the additional flip-down rear seats able to house hominids of 1.5m stature and below. The thinking here is that this arrangement makes the GT more practical and thus more appealing than before, particularly to Porsche 911 enthusiasts. Those keen driverists will also undoubtedly notice the extra boot space that the GT has – all 321 litres of it. For reference, the similarly priced 911 Turbo offers up to just 264 litres of luggage capacity. Eat that, Stuttgart!

Of course, it was necessary for the latest GT to grow in size to accommodate such luxuries. Vehicle dimensions include a width of 2,100mm, a length of 4,728mm, and a height of 1,354mm. The old GT? That car's width was 2,075mm, length 4,544mm and height 1,287mm. Those are significant differences and yet the new C192 still maintains a Germanically efficient footprint, the increases in both its front and rear overhangs masterfully neutered by that taller roofline, which balances the whole design.

The knock-on effect on kerb weight, however, is immense, and that's before you consider the new GT's four-wheel-drive system and rear-wheel steering. Steady yourself before reading this next part, as it takes some digesting: the latest GT63 weighs in at 2,130kg whereas its predecessor tipped the scales at 1,665kg. The bottom line is, in order for AMG

△ Hooded digital dials for the GT's lucky driver.

◁△ Kyle found Sport mode well suited to the UK.

△ The new GT offers more boot space than a 911.

> "The GT63's specification is otherwise as punchy as you'd hope given the £165,000 entry ticket"

to make its two-door GT more usable, Affalterbach had to increase the car's kerb weight by a staggering 25 per cent!

Wales awaits

So, what could this possibly mean for the GT's drive? North Wales should provide the answer. My target location is familiar territory – in fact, the very same roads on which I drove the latest SL55 (August/September 2023 issue). This is important because the GT and SL share much of their chassis underpinnings and hardware. Given how well the SL performed on the ever-undulating back routes, and the fact the four-litre V8's punch in 469bhp form was hardly short of wow-factor, I'm breathlessly keen to see how the GT63 compares to its soft-topped brethren. ▷

▽ The C192 GT shares much with the R232 SL.

▷ People up to 1.5m tall will fit in the rear seats.

Open world

▷ An hour after crossing The Mersey Gateway Bridge, I'm finally enjoying the fruits of an early start; the deep greens of Welsh scenery creep ever higher up the GT's raked windscreen and I'm now fully accustomed to the quick steering. The ride is firm, but teeth fillings remain unrattled such is the GT's ability to round off spikes in the road surface. At this point, the GT feels much like an SL but even more 'switched on', almost as if the car feels even more primed for a turn of speed at a moment's notice.

It doesn't take much longer for such opportunities to present themselves. Compared to the '55' badged V8 in the SL, the GT63's 577bhp powerplant hits even harder from low speeds, and pulls with greater ferocity on the approach to its redline. I'm embarrassed to admit that I tweak a neck muscle during one particularly effervescent getaway conducted strictly for research purposes. Those familiar with the 6.2 V8 in the SLS will appreciate how this latest 'hot-V' motor finds a second wind as peak power takes over from peak torque, although I suspect they'll miss the M156's climactic hurry to the final few numbers preceding its redline.

In a strange way, it pains me to admit AMG has really outdone itself with the multi-clutch gearbox's automatic modes. The C-shaped paddles behind the steering wheel look lovely and don't make any kind of cheap sounding click when pulled, but the automatically rev-matched downshifts and smooth upshifts of full auto mode make Manual mode almost pointless. Almost…

The GT63 isn't perfect though. A downside of both its additional grunt and four-wheel-drive setup is more pronounced torque steer. The feeling is hardly like something you'd find in an early-2000s turbo hatchback, but the nose does get more fidgety whilst full beans are being served up, sometimes requiring a firmer grip of the steering wheel to keep things on line. This isn't something I ever noticed while driving the SL55.

A few big stops also call into question the raw performance of the GT63's compound brake system. If this were my purchase, I'd be figuring out a way to upgrade to AMG's fantastic ceramic composite stoppers. This is a 2.1-tonne Mercedes, after all, and a focused one at that. However, such is the way things are these days, you can't just add the ceramics on their own – you must upgrade from Premium Plus to Ultimate trim line and in the process find another £11,000. I came to a similar conclusion about the SL55's brake setup, but the situation is more pronounced in the GT63 because you can find yourself travelling that bit faster into critical braking zones.

As a side note, Ultimate spec GTs also feature different style 21-inch wheels (wrapped in unchanged 295/30 front and 305/30 rear rubber), as well as a fixed rear wing and AMG Performance seats.

So, after 600 miles driving the GT63 in the UK, does the coupe live up to expectations? I've tried my best, but I can't get over the GT's sheer weight, even if it does a mighty fine job of hiding pretty much all of it. I appreciated the additional comfort AMG has brought to the GT, but found

△ We are very thankful that such an engine still exists...

▷ The GT63 feels fantastic on all types of road surface.

myself yearning for a purer sports machine. Speaking of which, such is the GT's position in AMG's new model hierarchy, which sees this car covering not just the old GT but arguably the discontinued S-Class Coupe as well, there now appears sufficient room to justify a smaller, lighter coupe/roadster that is more straightforward in approach. A new-age SLK/SLC, in other words.

It begs the question: was there another way for AMG to achieve the 2+2 layout without adding so many kilograms? The four-wheel-drive system would have to go to get anywhere close to the old GT's kerb weight, but then you'd lose some of the new car's all-round usability. I've a sneaking suspicion the rear-wheel steering exists to counteract the ballooning weight, so there's a case for dropping that system too. However, unless AMG grafted in some even more expensive lightweight construction techniques, this GT with its larger footprint would still weigh more than the old car. So it seems AMG really had no alternative to a big increase in kerb weight if it was to achieve the luxury feel expected of Mercedes while making its new GT more user-friendly and landing it at this price point.

"So, after 600 miles driving the GT63 in the UK, does the coupe live up to expectations?"

I don't know about you, but what would remain after the aforementioned weight-saving process sounds like a rather exciting track-focused machine and a worthy rival to a GT2-type Porsche 911. Over to you, AMG…

Thank you to Mercedes-Benz UK for the loan of the car
Web *www.mercedes-benz.co.uk*

Just The Facts

Mercedes-AMG GT63 4Matic+ Coupe (C192)

Engine M178 3,982cc V8 biturbo **Power** 577bhp@5,500-6,500rpm **Torque** 590lb ft@2,500-5,000rpm **Transmission** 9-speed auto, 4WD

Weight 2,130kg 0-62mph 3.2sec **Top speed** 196mph **Fuel consumption** 20.0mpg **CO2 emissions** 319g/km **Years produced** 2023-on

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

Market spotlight

Mathew Priddy, Head of Auctions at Historics, shares expert insight into the classic, modern classic and modern Mercedes markets

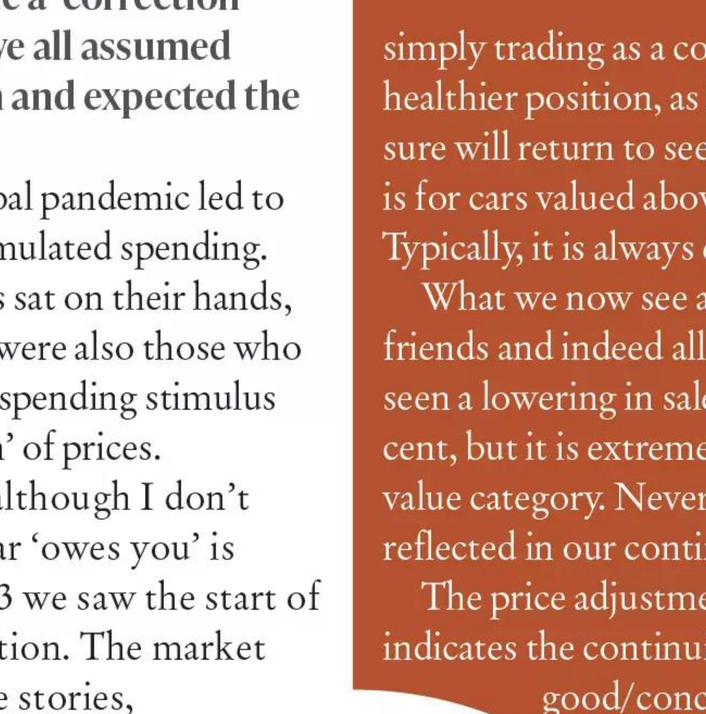
WORDS **MATHEW PRIDDY, HISTORICS' HEAD OF AUCTIONS** IMAGES **HISTORICS AUCTIONEERS**

It has been an interesting 2024 so far, *writes Mathew Priddy, Head of Auctions at Historics.* **The landscape for any classic car, Mercedes-Benz and beyond, has changed significantly in the past five years. Prior to Covid, prices were stable but probably were due a 'correction' which, when 2019 arrived, we all assumed would happen. We all dug in and expected the worst... but it didn't happen.**

In fact, the opposite occurred. The global pandemic led to some record prices as the government stimulated spending. Whilst a proportion of prospective buyers sat on their hands, others got wealthier, and inevitably there were also those who missed the gravy train. Nevertheless, this spending stimulus became a problem that led to a 'correction' of prices.

Cars were 'owing' people too much, although I don't really subscribe to that term as what a car 'owes you' is irrelevant to its worth. However, in 2023 we saw the start of what we would refer to as a price correction. The market was not depressed and, contrary to scare stories, cars were and are still changing hands vigorously. Indeed, Historics didn't dip below a 72 per cent sales rate and in some instances touched 80 per cent. However, cars frequently had to be exchanged for less than owners had perhaps bought them for in that period which was a tough pill to swallow.

Fast forward to today and with higher interest rates, the investment side of the classic market has cooled... not completely, but it has left behind genuine enthusiasts and collectors – those who actually appreciate the 'asset' and are simply trading as a commodity. This probably leaves us in a healthier position, as investor funding is still about and I'm sure will return to see prices flex in the future. At present this is for cars valued above £250,000 and for the elite collector. Typically, it is always easier to make money when you have it!



▷ Much has changed recently, says Mathew Priddy.

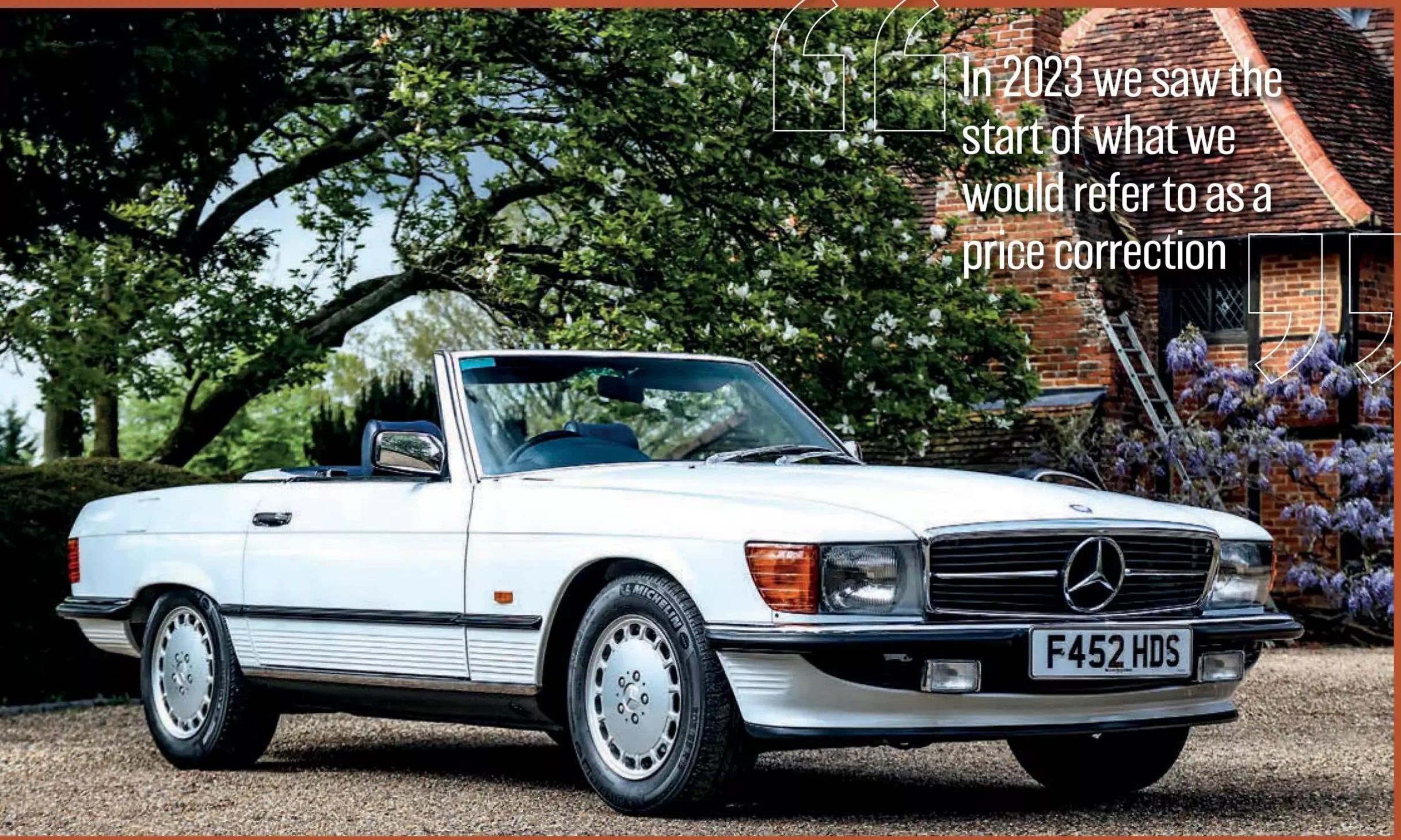
What we now see and have been highlighting to our clients, friends and indeed all enthusiasts is that price correction has seen a lowering in sale prices – in some cases around 20 per cent, but it is extremely variable according to marque, era and value category. Nevertheless, the market remains buoyant, reflected in our continuingly healthy sale rate.

The price adjustment has polarised the quality of cars which indicates the continuing robustness of the market. A very good/concours example, or a classic that is truly coveted and pampered – and/or has exceptional provenance – will frequently generate a bidding war because it's the best, unique or one of a kind, and cars of this nature will continue to reward their owners with a strong sale price.

One recent example was an exceptionally low mileage and original R107 300SL offered by Historics at our inaugural 'Flight of Elegance' sale at Farnborough International. It was a car with just 2,700 miles from new in what I can only describe as 'time-warp' condition. It sold for a mighty £77,953 including premium. This is not

▽ Low-mile R107 had blue MB-Tex and the optional rear bench seat.

▷ 1989 300SL with just 2,700 miles sold for a fantastic £77,953.



> In 2023 we saw the start of what we would refer to as a price correction

△△ Horizon Blue 280SL Pagoda expertly restored by Hemmels.

△ Navy blue leather; this car spent time at Mercedes World.

the only example of this model that has sold very well of late (albeit a model that I thought may be tailing off, but I have been proved wrong!). It strengthens the 'Good cars make good money' philosophy.

But with every success come stories of car values reducing and this could be said of 190SLs of late. Although achingly attractive, this 1950s icon has slipped from the upswell of buyers favouring the late 60s-on models. Personally, I think they will have a resurgence but the question again with the older cars – where mileage is less relevant–- is what makes one stand out from another? Such is the volume of cars coming to market that buyers have plenty of choices and quality dictates value.

The same issues are relevant to even Pagodas and, in the Jaguar camp, XKs and E-Types. A buyer's tip is to capitalise on those that are 'over-restored' where an owner has perhaps enjoyed the journey rather than the destination, lavishing great attention and money on their pride and joy to such an extent that the cost appreciably outweighs the value on today's market. A truly exquisite, museum-quality Hemmels 280SL we offered at our Farnborough sale was an example of this – a car whose restoration cost may have been double the estimate of £165,000 to £195,000.

Future gains

Moving to modern classics – and a more buoyant part of the market of late. Typically, buyers are those with a belt of disposable income and are keen to spend or begin their ▷

△ 41,000-mile 190SL from 1962 and with 41,000 miles hit £66,000.

▷ Sold at £9,103, this 1973 280CE would make a great project.

▷ collection. The SLR at the upper end of the market is finally seeing its values realised. This is a truly special car in Mercedes-Benz history and of course McLaren's, and thus deserves to be considered as a blue-chip investment.

The SLS AMG Coupe is also seeing strong sales, again due to something relatively unique – the gullwing doors of course – but strong values are mileage-dependent. At the lower end of the price point, the engine seems to be the reason for excitement. And as we move into the EV age, it's wonderful to see that the idea of a truly collectable version of any V8, V10 and V12-powered classic still spurs on enthusiasts and collectors.

It's a shame mileage is such a factor. Bav Majithia from Yiannimize – a driver of modern collectable supercars – agreed with us in a recent 'Refuel Podcast with Historics Auctioneers' that classics should be driven, as that is the point of their existence. However, when it comes to value we are not winning the battle here, so buyers tend to opt for a low-mileage SL55 or a V12-powered example perhaps, with sub 20,000 miles, as something that is deemed collectable.

Indeed, in November last year we sold a one-owner R230 SL55 AMG, a standard car – not with the F1 performance pack so sought-after – for a whopping £66,000, again because the mileage was just 645 from new. Doubtless in need of a big service, the buyer was delighted with the purchase as was the seller given we had to recommission and drag the car from its slumber in his garage. It props up the R230 market where you can buy a nice SL500 for under £15,000.

▷ 1965 300SE Fintail made £44,240 in May's Historic event.

Enthusiasts welcome

To summarise, the market is not in a bad place – it is in a realistic place. It's a nicer place to operate in than before, as buyers and sellers are more likely to be genuine enthusiasts. The only difficulty at present is simply levelling expectations of sellers, many having been told whatever they needed to hear to place their car for sale with some nebulous online platform. Whilst admitting bias, I think this is a very poor alternative to the honest guidance we provide to our clients.

My advice to anyone looking for a valuation is simply to speak to a genuine physical auction house or specialist that has a great track record and are trusted in the industry. This includes even those not in sales. There are a good number of us (although of course I'll place Historics at the head of the list for a free, no-obligation valuation!). Every reputable specialist or auction house should give you an honest, real value assessment. Sometimes it may be disappointing to vendors, but we will never condone those who over value

△ 1991 190E 2.6 with 108,000 miles found a new home at £6,944.

▽ Ex-Swiss CLK230 Kompressor had 75,000 miles and sold for just £3,360.

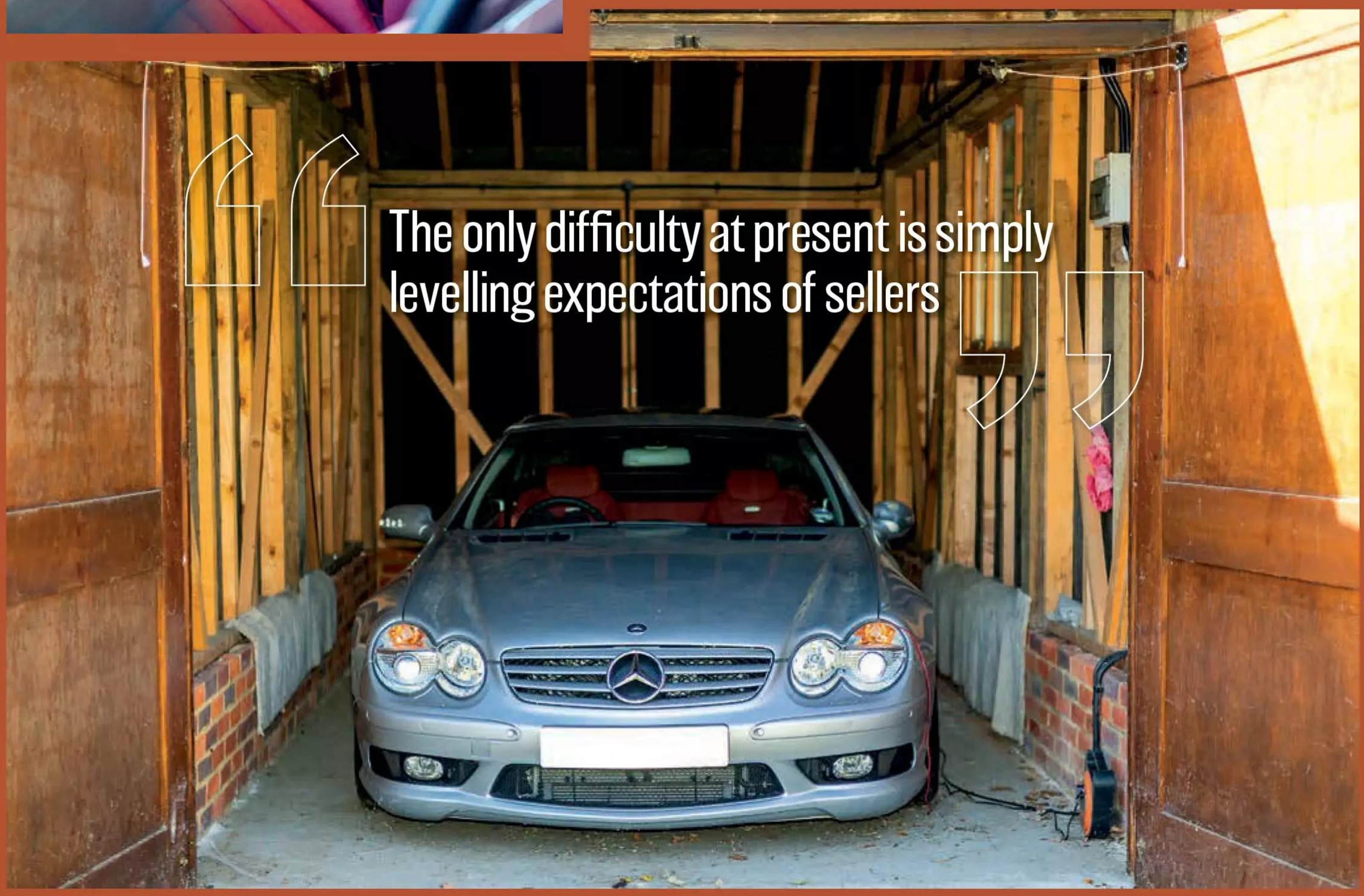
△ 2008 SLK55 AMG with 29,000 miles sold in May 2024 for just £20,000!

◁ SLS Final Edition had an estimate of £330K-£360K.

simply to get a sale entry, which of course means that in this market the car is far less likely to sell.

Most of all enjoy your car, your purchase, even your sale! Cars are built to be driven, enjoyed and the sun has finally arrived! We look forward to seeing you on the roads and hopefully at our upcoming auctions buying, selling or just browsing the latest stock.

Historics Auctioneers is hosting a special classic car auction event at Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey on November 23 called 'The Brooklands Velocity'. See www.historics.co.uk for more information



Square deals

SUVs of a certain age represent great value at the moment, as our used car market expert explains

WORDS **GUY BAKER** IMAGES **MIDLAND CAR GROUP, COBALT MOTORS & PAVILION MOTORS**

2012 ML350 Bluetec at Midland Car Group was priced at under £12,000.

△ Pavilion Motors' 2016 GLC250d AMG Line yours for £17,000.

Everyone seems to want an SUV these days, and let's be honest – the best ones do have that glamour-with-practicality vibe pretty well covered. Some even have genuine kerb appeal. However, the trouble is they don't come cheap – especially when we're talking about a new contemporary model.

Fortunately, fashion is almost always fickle. And if you're prepared to wait just a few years before pushing the buy button then you could glean far better value. Steer clear of both ends of the model range too and you could be looking at a pretty good deal. And that's exactly what canny SUV buyers have been doing for years.

Most people's memories are relatively short, so if you slap on a private plate most road users won't even realise that your ride is actually a good deal more mature than they realised. And you can bask in the warm glow of knowing that you paid a whole heap less than they think you did.

Older W166 MLs for example are a prime target, with the 2011-2015 ML350 Bluetec diesel arguably the pick of the bunch. Quite a few have over 100,000 miles on the clock and start from just £8,000, but the majority are private sales, which we'd recommend you avoid. Buy a safer dealer example instead, with under 100,000 miles – they're still great value but you've got much better legal comeback if anything ever goes wrong with the vehicle.

△ The 166-series ML has a smart and solid feeling cabin.

Something like this white, 2012 ML350 Bluetec Sport V6 we spotted at Midland Car Group in Walsall (www.midlandcargroup.co.uk) looks like an ideal target. With 91,000 miles it was priced at just £11,990 and came with an impressive spec that included Comand Online, heated front seats, Active Park Assist with Parktronic and Speedtronic cruise control.

Heavy hitters

If you're lucky enough to have a bigger budget, then the 167-series GLE300d is also worthy of your consideration. It's a good deal more expensive of course, but values of early 2019 cars are now substantially lower than they were just a few months ago and offer great value compared to a brand new model. Most buyers opt for a 350d or a 400d instead, so demand is lower – despite plentiful supply. So you should demand a decent discount too.

This blue, 2019 GLE300d AMG Line at Cobalt Motors (www.cobaltmotors.co.uk) in Newcastle, for example, is typical of what you could buy. With 84,000 miles, it looked in mint condition and we're sure you could do a deal at nearly a grand under the £29,990 asking price. It's well kitted out and undercut a brand new model by an eye-watering 50 grand!

Step down a size and you'll find some great deals on the X253 GLC. The 2015 to 2019 GLC250d in particular is around in large numbers with some buyers getting pretty serious discounts. This highly-specced, white, 89,000-mile, 2016 GLC250d AMG Line Premium at Pavilion Motors in Oldham (www.pavilionmotorcompany.co.uk) was advertised for £16,999 and claimed a full service history record plus just two former owners. And there are plenty of others around like it at similar prices. It seems like there's never been a better time to buy a used Mercedes SUV.

△ 84,000-mile GLE300d at Cobalt Motors was £29,990.

▶ *Fancy something more affordable? Then check out our top three £10,000 bargain Mercedes on page 76!*

Forecourt find

560SEC (C126)

Who doesn't have a soft spot for an original, low-mileage Mercedes-Benz 560SEC? This Smoke Silver, 1988 example for sale at Edward Hall in Aylesbury had covered a mere 33,296 miles and must be one of the best examples in the UK. It had Brazil Brown leather upholstery and all the accessories that came as standard only on the 560SEC, including memory seats, a two-tone horn, air conditioning, cruise control and a Becker Mexico stereo.

Boasting just three previous owners, all the original books and manuals, and full service history, this two-door Mercedes has always been kept inside and used sparingly in good weather since new. The asking price at this renowned Mercedes specialist was £59,995.

△ The 560SEC's 5,547cc, M117 V8 engine produced 296bhp in 1988; the asking price £60,000.

△ Just 33K miles and three former keepers.

△ Mint-condition interior with brown hide.

Dealer information:
Edward Hall Classic Mercedes
Tel: 01844 339666 or 07815 870911

Auction spotlight

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

- **B200 Turbo**
  2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2006/06-plate, 73,000 miles, **£2,800**
- **SLK200 Kompressor**
  1.8-litre, petrol, auto, 2005/55-plate, 69,000 miles, **£3,900**
- **CLS500 Coupe**
  5.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2005/05-plate, 98,000 miles, **£4,100**
- **CLS350d Coupe AMG Line PP**
  3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2017/17-plate, 48,000 miles, **£16,150**
- **SLC300 AMG Line**
  2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2017/67-plate, 41,000 miles, **£17,300**
- **AMG A35 4Matic Hatchback**
  2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/19-plate, 36,000 miles, **£19,350**
- **C200 Cabriolet AMG Line Premium**
  1.5-litre, petrol-electric, auto, 2020/69-plate, 26,000 miles, **£22,300**
- **A250e Saloon AMG Line Premium Plus**
  1.3-litre, petrol-electric, auto, 2022/22-plate, 31,000 miles, **£22,900**
- **S350d L AMG Line Executive Premium Plus**
  3.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2018/67-plate, 117,000 miles, **£25,000**
- **AMG GLC43 AMG 4Matic SUV Premium Plus**
  3.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/19-plate, 37,000 miles, **£27,400**
- **C300 Saloon AMG Line Premium**
  2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2022/71-plate, 21,000 miles, **£30,000**
- **GLC300 Coupe AMG Line 4Matic**
  2.0-litre, petrol-electric, auto, 2021/21-plate, 27,000 miles, **£30,300**
- **AMG A45 S 4Matic+ Hatchback**
  2.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2020/70-plate, 24,000 miles, **£30,400**
- **AMG E53 4Matic+ Coupe Premium**
  3.0-litre, petrol, auto, 2019/69-plate, 20,000 miles, **£35,300**
- **GLE300d 4Matic SUV AMG Line**
  2.0-litre, diesel, auto, 2021/21-plate, 18,000 miles, **£40,800**

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. But that requires up-to-date market information, however, which is why we generate fresh Mercedes market data every month, to give you the best chance of bagging a great deal. A car's colour, spec, fuel type, mileage and drivetrain all affect its value...

Top 6 best-selling used Mercedes

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

1 A-Class (21.0%)
2 C-Class (19.5%)
3 E-Class (12.6%)
4 CLA-Class (7.4%)
5 GLC-Class (5.8%)
6 GLA-Class (5.5%)

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 (29.2%)
2 Silver (19.0%)
3 White (16.9%)
4 Grey (17.8%)
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 48.9%
Between 50,000 and 80,000 miles 25.7%
More than 80,000 miles 25.4%

Fuel watch

How are used Mercedes powered?

Diesel 48.9%
Petrol 37.8%
Hybrid 10.4%
Full electric 2.9%

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

Front-wheel drive 33.5%
Rear-wheel drive 44.6%
Four-wheel drive 21.9%

TOP THREE

£10,000 bargains

If your 'new Mercedes' budget is around £10,000 then you might think your options will be somewhat limited. But you'd be very wrong. The wonders of depreciation have ensured that there are actually plenty of appealing bargain Mercedes out there for those on a 10 grand budget. And we've scoured the classifieds to reveal three very different Mercedes models that you can buy for less than £10,000. Just make sure you buy a cherished example that's been well maintained and comes with complete service history.

E350 Bluetec Estate (S212)

Those requiring a Mercedes with a fair degree of practicality should take a closer look at the 212-series E-Class Estate. In E350 Bluetec AMG Sport guise especially, it has much to offer. As well as an impressive carrying capacity it also claims strong performance, with 457lb ft of torque translating into a 6.9-second 0-62mph time and a 155mph top speed. Annual road tax is a very reasonable £255 and you should better 45mpg economy on longer journeys. You could pick up a high-spec, well-maintained 2013 example with 90,000 miles for around £10,000.

SL500 (R230)

Seeking a modern classic Mercedes instead? Then look no further than the R230 SL500. Our budget easily puts you behind the wheel of an early 2002 example with full service history and as little as 70,000 miles on the clock. Boasting oodles of charm and plenty of car park kudos most people simply won't believe you bought it for just £10,000. And although you'll have to fork out £415 a year to tax this droptop Mercedes-Benz, that classic, five-litre M113 V8 makes the expenditure worthwhile. When the sun's out, there are few finer places to be.

C250d (W205)

In contrast to our first two contenders, a 205-series C250d Sport Saloon may seem a relatively rudimentary choice, but you might be surprised by its virtues. Our budget bags a 2016, seven-speed automatic with a host of optional extras and a maximum of 100,000 miles, and it'll cost you just £20 a year in road tax! Not only that but you could touch 60mpg on motorway journeys – and this ubiquitous saloon can also hit 153mph and 62mph from standstill in just 6.6 seconds. What's not to like?

Latest products and accessories

Dodo Juice Ferrous Dueller

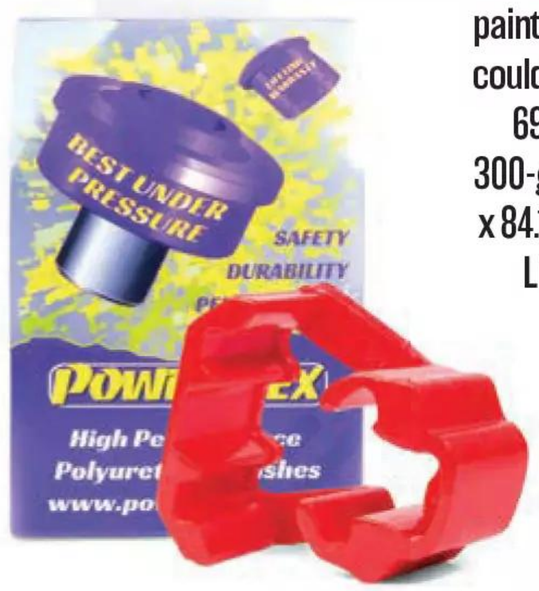
Removing baked-on dirt, brake dust, salt and general grime from your beloved motor can be a serious bind, but Dodo Juice's new Ferrous Dueller can make the task a whole lot easier, thanks to its impressive ability to evict iron particles from their unwanted tenure on your motor.

Ferrous Dueller is both easy to spray and apply, and offers plenty of cling time to get to work on removing contaminants. Priced at £11.00 for a 500ml bottle, you can buy direct from **www.dodojuice.net**

Powerflex engine mount bushes for C117 CLA-Class

Whether you're looking to replace tired OE items or upgrade your ride for the track Powerflex is the go-to UK company for suspension bushes, and it has recently brought out enhanced lower and upper Road Series engine mounts for the 2013-2018 CLA-Class.

Fitting into the original mounts to limit movement of the engine to provide stability under acceleration the Lower Engine Mount Insert has part number PFF40-121 and the Upper Engine Mount is part number PFF40-120. The pair together retail for £64.48 including VAT. Find full details at **www.powerflex.co.uk**



Mercedes SL Pagoda limited edition art print

If you or a loved one is a fan of the W113 Mercedes SL Pagoda – one of the most sought-after classics of all time – then this limited edition art print painted by German artist Jonathan von Moevinckel could be the ideal gift.

69 Pit Stop is now offering this work on 300-gram paper in two sizes: 42 x 59.4cm and 59.4 x 84.1cm (16.53 x 23.38 and 23.38 x 33.11 inches). Limited to just 63 prints in both formats (the car was launched in 1963), each print is personally signed and numbered by Jonathan von Moevinckel. Priced at €89 and €129 respectively, orders can be placed at **www.69pitstop.com**

Signature Tune AMG CLA35 4MATIC

So you've bought a 2019-on AMG CLA35 4Matic – but how can you make it even more fun to drive Here are our recommendations...

In standard form, the CLA35 Coupe sees off 62mph in a swift 4.9 seconds, which is only nine tenths off the full-fat CLA45.

As small four-door coupes go, the 302bhp CLA35 4Matic is something of a gem. And although it's based on the humble A-Class, it looks super-stylish and delivers potent performance in an effortless way. The benchmark 0-62mph dash is dispatched in a mere 4.9 seconds, the eight-speed dual-clutch is very impressive, the steering feels engagingly direct and, thanks to all-wheel drive, the CLA35's traction and grip are bordering on epic, powering the car out of even the tightest bends.

Taken together, these attributes make the C118 a pretty serious performance car, not just a baby 45 AMG, and it sounds the business too – although a remap plus the right exhaust can make the CLA35 sound even more impressive. And travel even quicker. But it's not just the power plant that can be augmented, many owners have also turned their attention to the car's transmission, braking, suspension and styling. Here are some of upgrades you could do.

△ We've been impressed by the '35 AMG' four-cylinder, offering a '45 AMG' lite experience.

Engine

A stage 1 ECU remap will take output to around 355bhp and 400lb ft and, if you are that way inclined, some tuners can also add plenty of crackles and burbles on the overrun with the right exhaust. There are numerous exhaust and induction options, whilst speed limiter removal could see you touching 168mph. GAD Tuning, DMS Automotive, Avon Tuning and BR-Performance are all popular tuning houses with owners.

Transmission

MSL, JF Automotive and JR Tuning can all remap your CLA35's transmission to deliver slightly swifter gear changes, smoother gearshifts, a quicker reaction to any paddleshift inputs, and enhance the torque at certain rpm points. We'd recommend you get this done at the same time as any engine ECU remap.

Suspension

Owners have fitted both lowering springs and full-blown coil-over systems, with the most popular coil-overs being Brabus, Bilstein, Ohlins, BC Racing and KW Variant 3.

Eibach and Koni seem to be the preferred choices for lowering springs but make sure that your OE dampers are still in tip-top condition.

Brakes

Tuners offer a plethora of different uprated pads and discs, however the ultimate in stopping power would be provided by a big brake kit, with Brembo, EBC, Forge Motorsport and AP Racing all producing options. Just check that braided hoses are included in any kit.

Wheels and bodywork

AMG alloys are the preferred option for most CLA35 owners but we'd recommend you stick to no larger than 19-inch rims if you're planning regular track days. And ensure that the un-sprung weight is kept to a minimum. Brabus, Lorinser and others produce a variety of trim and body styling options for the CLA.

Interior

Many CLA35 owners have chosen to enhance their car's interior, with some adding colour-coded items while others prefer alloy and carbon trim. Quite a few have also upgraded the CLA's infotainment system.

△ The fantastic MBUX infotainment system in the CLA35; interior upgrades are available.

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Mercedes ENTHUSIAST

December/January 2025 issue

ON SALE November 8th

Contents are subject to change

All-rounder

Replacing the left-hand-drive GLK SUV, the first-generation GLC opened up entirely new markets for Mercedes-Benz, including the UK. Here we review the most popular facelifted model – the GLC220d four-cylinder turbodiesel – and reveal what to look out for when buying your own

WORDS **DAVID SUTHERLAND** IMAGES **MERCEDES-BENZ GROUP AG**

Of all Mercedes' niche-filling models of recent years, the GLC range introduced in autumn 2015 and factory coded X253 is perhaps the most obvious and best defined. A four-wheel-drive SUV of manageable, C-Class dimensions and affordable for many on a PCP contract, it has become a very familiar sight in the better-heeled parts of town, giving Audi and BMW SUV counterparts a run for their money. Practical and good looking in a modern Mercedes way, it's a jack-of-all-trades car and convenient and enjoyable to own, as *Mercedes Enthusiast* can attest to, having run a 2017 GLC220d from new up to over 75,000 miles with no issues other than wear-out replacements.

As was normal in that pre-dieselgate time, the variants offered were mostly based around the 2.1-litre, four-cylinder turbodiesel engine, with three-litre V6 diesel and petrol options for those happy to push out the price envelope. Less than four years later, in early summer 2019, and with a clutch of glowing reviews under its belt, the GLC was presented in facelifted form. It looked all but identical, but boasted all-new engines. Built until 2022 when replaced by the present X254 GLC generation, it's now available from around £20,000. So how does this only recently discontinued Mercedes shape up as a used buy? We're looking at two diesel models in particular, the GLC220d and GLC300d.

Design and engineering

As is usually the case when a Mercedes model hits the spot, the mandatory mid-term facelift was clearly a balancing act to freshen up the look but not to annoy existing owners by relegating their cars to obsolescence. Hence the changes were limited to a noticeable but not radical new grille, some new chrome and louvres, and new road wheels. Inside, there was a redesigned steering wheel and some advances in the multimedia display controls, but the cabin looked the same as before.

However, what was found under the bonnet was entirely new and, notably, Mercedes still considered diesel a key element on the line-up. For the GLC220d, the OM651, 2,143cc diesel was replaced by the new OM654 oil burner of 1,950cc, power rising 23bhp to 191bhp despite the capacity drop, while peak torque

Spotted for sale

PRIVATE SELLER
GLC220d AMG Line
2019/69, black, black Artico leather, 120,000 miles, £19,999, Dudley, West Midlands

"So how does this only recently discontinued Mercedes shape up as a used buy?"

remained at 295lb ft, here produced between 1,600rpm and 2,800rpm. The 300d used the same engine but was set up for 242bhp and 369lb ft. The petrol motor, for the GLC300, was the M264 unit and also two litres, making a heady 254bhp.

The gains in efficiency were thanks to various measures making these engines ever more technically sophisticated. Camtronic variable valve control helped with lowering fuel consumption, as did the new 48V electrical system with belt-driven starter generator, while the SCR (Selective Catalytic Reduction) exhaust gas aftertreatment further cut emissions. Only one transmission package was offered, the 9G-Tronic Plus automatic mated to auto-engaging 4Matic four-wheel-drive.

The facelifted GLC (which also included the GLC Coupe line-up) went on sale in the UK at the end of May 2019, the GLC220d from £39,400 and the 300d from £47,000. Customers wanting the base model would seek out a GLC220d in Sport form, its equipment comprising 18-inch alloys, heated seats and privacy glass. It's likely, though, that they'd be offered a better deal on the AMG Line pack, with lots of attractive added kit including 19-inch AMG alloys, AMG body styling (AMG front apron with bigger air vents, and chrome trim), sports seats in Artico 'made-made' leather. If you wanted a GLC300d, AMG Line was the minimum level.

The next step up was AMG Line Premium, bringing 20-inch wheels and running boards, multi-beam LED headlamps, leather upholstery and upgraded, ambient interior lighting. However, one feature many owners find invaluable – multi-way electrically adjustable front seats with 'his 'n' hers' position memory – was still not included, so if you wanted this you needed AMG Premium Plus, only available on the GLC300d, which also included a panoramic glass sunroof and a Burmester surround sound system. By now, the vehicle price was up to £50,800 – but this wasn't the range-topper, that being the 300d AMG Line Ultimate at £57,700, featuring air suspension.

Driving the GLC

The GLC, pre- or post-facelift, is a typical modern Mercedes product, a car that is refined almost to perfection, but which offers little stimulation in terms of styling and driving tactility. That said, it's a car likely to become much loved to due to its practicality and all-round ability.

Your first impression on entering a GLC for the first time may well be the surprise of sitting quite low down, despite the elevated SUV body. The high waistline and the invisibility of the bonnet ahead makes you feel quite entombed and disconnected from the road, while rear visibility is so limited that the Parktronic and reversing camera are essential fittings.

Interior quality cannot be faulted, all trim looking and feeling solid, but the minor control layout is surprisingly poor. The buttons on the central console are far too small, and three stalks on the left side of the steering column is too many, especially as they're obscured by the steering wheel.

For most, the GLC220d will offer adequate performance, the added output of the GLC300d not making a significant difference. One aspect of the GLC that is most impressive is how smooth and quiet it is at motorway speeds. Away from high-speed cruising, some might think the steering somewhat twitchy, due to the high gearing and small steering wheel. Boot capacity is generous (550 to 1,600 litres), and the rear seat back, a 60/40 split arrangement, folds down with one light touch switch.

Just the facts

Mercedes-Benz GLC220d 4Matic SUV (X253)

Engine	OM654 1,950cc 4-cyl turbocharged
Power	191bhp@3,800rpm
Torque	295lb ft@1,600-2,800rpm
Transmission	9-speed auto, 4WD
Weight	1,835kg
0-62mph	7.7sec
Top speed	134mph
Fuel consumption	44.1-46.3mpg
CO2 emissions	159-166g/km
Years produced	2019-2022

All figures from Mercedes-Benz for a facelifted, first-generation GLC220d as pictured; fuel consumption according to WLTP

What you'll pay

Normally in our Buyer's Guides we deal with models past the age that franchised Mercedes-Benz dealers would handle, but in the case of the GLC you'll find plenty for sale. So that's the best used car warranty, but at the same time probably the highest price. While the pre-facelift GLCs are heading down towards £15,000, a facelifted GLC200d on the official Mercedes-Benz car locator typically starts at around £24,000, and for that expect around 50,000 miles on the clock. At the other end of the scale, cars from 2021 and with under 20,000 miles are still £35,000 to £40,000.

Turning to independent used car dealers, the choice is also large. All these ex-PCP and lease cars have to go somewhere, and you see, for example, on Auto Trader, up to 300 of the GLC220d and GLC300d offered. You'll find a GLC220d for £20,000, but it will probably have over 100,000 miles. A typical price for a 2020 car with 50,000 miles would be £23,000, a little lower than a Mercedes dealer sticker price.

With like for like equipment pack, the GLC300d was around £2,400 more than the GLC200d, but at the four-year stage there's now little difference in the values of the two models. ▷

X253 GLC Inside and out

Specialist overview
Steve Dickens, Autoclass Garage in Milton Keynes
"The OM654 turbodiesel engine is not as reliable as the older unit. We've seen a few issues with it, and there are some Mercedes-Benz recalls out for these engines in relation to coolant in the vacuum system. Check whether any relevant recalls have been carried out.
The nine-speed gearbox 725 gearbox is normally quite reliable, but again we've seen problems with it."
autoclassgarage.co.uk

Powertrain

● Cars that have predominantly been used for short journeys can suffer a blocked up low-pressure Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) filter. This will cause the engine light to illuminate, so check on a road test the car has full engine power and that no warning lights are illuminated.

● Like many others in the Mercedes range, these cars suffer with NOx and AdBlue issues. Therefore check the AdBlue level is reading in the instrument cluster – if it is not, this is a sign that the system has been 'mapped' out.

● Ask a Mercedes-Benz dealer to check the online service history, as inadequate servicing can cause premature wear to the rocker arms, which damages the cam box.

● Once mileage has passed 100,000 miles, there is a possibility of the engine timing chain stretching.

● The electro-hydraulic plate, or transmission control unit (TCU), can fail, which often results in a message on the dash saying reversing isn't possible. If so, the TCU must be replaced.

● The gearbox service is due at 75,000 miles. If the car is higher mileage than this, check the service has been completed because as with the engine, skimped servicing inevitably stores up trouble.

Refined for a four-pot diesel; Dynamic driving modes switch.

Suspension, steering and braking system

● Check for knocks and/or bangs when driving over speed bumps or bumpy ground. GLCs commonly suffer excessive play in the spring link arms on the front suspension, which must then be replaced.

● The original GLC is known for its 'tyre skip' issue, the tyres grabbing and scrabbling on the surface when moving slowly on full lock. This was improved on facelift models, as they have modified front uprights, but may still do this on a cold winter morning. It's understood Mercedes' "cure" for this issue is to fit winter tyres, as they have a softer sidewall.

● On the road test, check the brakes for squeaks, judders or vibration. The discs can become warped, which causes these symptoms.

4Matic four-wheel drive as standard.

Spotted for sale

USED CAR DEALER
GLC300d AMG Line Premium
2019/19, black, black Artico leather, 78,000 miles, Birmingham, £21,990

The car pictured is in Sport spec and runs on 18-inch alloys.

"Once mileage has passed 100,000 miles, there is a possibility of the engine timing chain stretching"

Bodywork and wheels

- Body panels are galvanised so should not rust, at least in this timescale. Look carefully for impact damage, and that panel gaps are as they should be.
- Although the GLC is not a car prone to being driven irresponsibly, a low price may indicate that it is a 'Category S' (structural) or 'Category N' (light damage) insurance write-off that has been professionally rebuilt. This may be stated in the advertisement.
- Check wheels for corrosion, as these are diamond cut and quite delicate.
- Even the smallest road wheels fitted to most GLCs, at 19-inch diameter, are comparatively large, and vulnerable to kerbing damage. All the more so the 20-inch alloy wheels on the Premium and Premium Plus models.

Features shared with the 205-series C-Class; 550 to 1,600-litre boot.

Interior and electrics

- The Artico man-made leather fitted to most GLCs is hard-wearing, the equivalent of the old style MB-Tex, but expect it to eventually go shiny at the contact points. Any rips or tears will be very expensive to have repaired.
- Any warning lights remaining on once the engine is running indicate problems, and all will be an MOT failure.
- If there are any glitches in the navigation or sound system, a software update may be required. A Mercedes-Benz dealer might perform this free of charge. ▷

X253 GLC Inside and out

Spotted for sale

MAIN DEALER GLC220d AMG Line

2020/20, silver metallic, Artico/microfibre Dinamica trim, 55,456 miles, ex-privately owned, £24,236, Mercedes-Benz of Lakeside

4Matic: What does it do?

Four-wheel drive transmissions for road cars came to prominence in the 1980s, and some, like Audi's quattro system, were marketed, initially at least, as performance aids. However, Mercedes-Benz took a different approach, building 4Matic into the car as a safety feature, connecting it to anti-lock braking and traction control. The 4Matic used in every GLC is the current evolution of a system designed to work safely and unobtrusively – it's likely that most customers don't know how it works, and don't care.

For the uninitiated but curious, the GLC is not primarily a 4WD car. In normal road conditions, only the rear wheels drive it, so no energy is wasted, minimising fuel consumption and hence emissions. But as soon as the surface becomes slippery, ice for example, drive engages to the front wheels for added road traction, brake and traction control sensors alerting the system to wheelspin.

At the same time, extra torque is fed to the wheels retaining the most road grip, and the hardware is so sophisticated that the Mercedes could maintain stable progress even with just one wheel left driving. Nice to know the GLC is quietly keeping you safe.

We love the GLC and we're sure you will too!

Typical basic servicing costs

(A/B services including 20% VAT)

Model	Oil Service	Major Service
GLC220d/GLC300d	£240	£380

Quotes from Autoclass Garage

Non-routine servicing costs

- ★ Replace EGR low pressure feed pipe (including filter) **£997**
- ★ Fit new engine timing chain **£1,495**
- ★ Fit new front/rear brake discs and pads **£480/£420**
- ★ Fit new front suspension spring link arms (per side) **£335**
- ★ Set of four premium brand tyres (235/55R19) **£600**

What you'll pay

£19,000-£20,000 Ex-fleet 2019 GLC220d with 100,000 miles, well used condition

£20,000-£25,00 2019/2020 GLC220d and GLC300d in AMG Line trim, from independent dealers. Some Mercedes-Benz dealer cars at this price

£25,000-£30,000 The main price band for 2019/2020 cars at Mercedes-Benz dealers. GLC300d priced slightly higher than GLC220d.

£30,000-£35,000 2021 cars with under 20,000 miles, many at Mercedes-Benz dealerships

Verdict

As a practical, comfortable and refined medium-sized SUV, the GLC is up there with the best. And there are now lots for sale at reasonably affordable prices, both at official Mercedes-Benz outlets and at independent dealers. However, our specialist reports that the OM654 engine in the 2019-on facelifted models doesn't have the same good reliability as the preceding OM651. That doesn't mean you should avoid these cars – but you do need to buy from a reputable source and check carefully that all scheduled serving has been done at the correct time.

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Job done

David Sutherland delivers his final verdict on his ever-dependable GLC, which has worked its way into his affections over the years

WORDS & IMAGES **DAVID SUTHERLAND**

△ **Handsome, comfy and practical – the GLC was a great buy.**

After taking delivery of our GLC220d AMG Line new in September 2017, it quickly found its way into the *Mercedes Enthusiast* Running Reports, appearing 15 times up to now. Here, the black SUV gets its final mention in the magazine, after over 75,000 miles.

It would have made great copy to say that its life with us has been 'eventful', but it hasn't. No breakdowns, just an unscheduled encounter with a lorry in central London followed by an unsuccessful argument with an insurance company uninterested in our protestations of blamelessness. A different marque of car has recently been added to our driveway, which I mention because it absolutely loves its dashboard warning lights, each one that stays on necessitating a trip to the local specialist in that particular German-owned, east European brand.

Other than its once-a-year service, which has been £400 to £600, the GLC has gone through two sets of batteries (one set replaced under warranty, the other more recently), two front suspension arms (an outrageous £300 each) and a piece of chrome-look trim for the outer edge of the front spoiler costing about £60 and which snapped into position. The 2.1-litre turbodiesel's Eco Start/Stop system operated only intermittently for a long time, but that turned out to be because the battery was weak, the problem disappearing once it was replaced.

Tyre specifications

However, one strange incident was that the front wheels would scrabble and grab when on full lock at car park speed. I asked around, thinking it might be a suspension issue, and tried different tyre pressures but nothing helped. Then one day a recall notice arrived from Mercedes-Benz inviting me to take the GLC to my local Mercedes dealer for a new set of tyres, free of charge. It seemed someone in Stuttgart had chosen the wrong tyre spec for the GLC, which must have been an expensive mistake given the number of cars involved. The new tyres fixed the problem, so we were happy. We'd have been a little more happy if the recall had come before we fitted a new set of Yokohamas, not after.

One thing I did not like in the beginning, but have at least got used to since, is that although this is described as an SUV, the driver doesn't have that breed of vehicle's see-over-hedges driving position. In fact, although you step up slightly to enter the cabin, you feel you are sitting quite low, due to the car's high waistline. It doesn't help that there is almost zero rear visibility, forcing you to rely on the reversing camera when backing up.

But such has been its exemplary service that the vehicle I first regarded as efficient but characterless has now worked its way into my affections. The dull drone of the OM651 diesel is now a friendly, dependable note, and I'm always impressed that the unexceptional looking but excellent seats deliver me in comfort over the longest journeys. I even now quite like the slightly disconnected front and back looks. It may be signing off from *Mercedes Enthusiast*, but the plan is for the GLC to be in our lives a good while yet, as we've become very fond of it.

FACTSHEET

CAR 2017 GLC220d AMG Line
OWNER David Sutherland
LOCATION Surrey, UK
PURCHASED September 2017
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Seven years of smooth ownership except for a few small mishaps along the way

How the car was presented to David at M-B Brooklands.

▽ **David has grown to appreciate the GLC turbodiesel's thrum.**

"The new tyres fixed the problem, so we were happy"

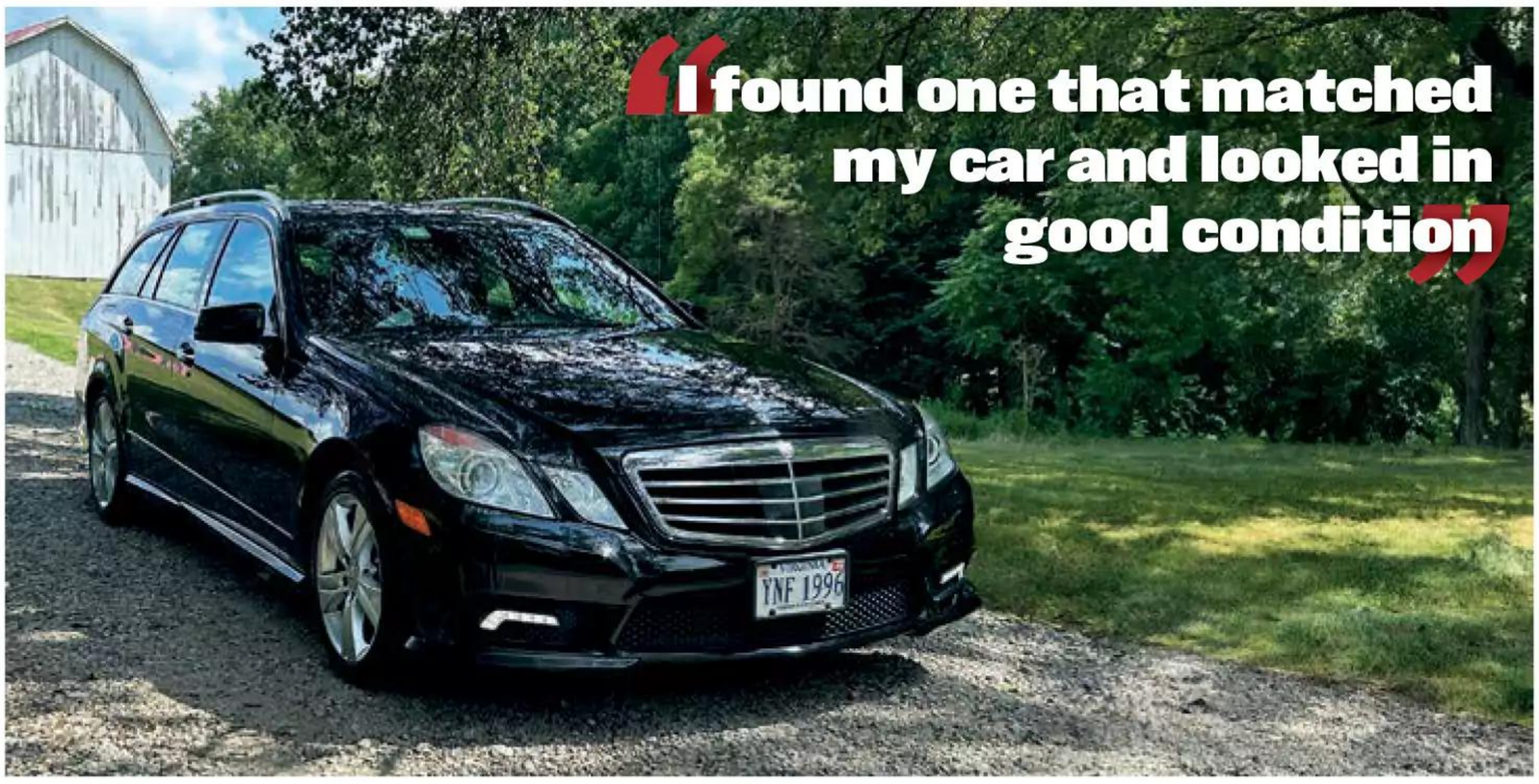
Leathering up

A dab hand at fixing mechanical issues, Reed Hitchcock recently turned his attention to correcting a cosmetic blemish inside his petrol-fuelled E-Class Estate – find out how our US correspondent fared

WORDS & IMAGES **REED HITCHCOCK**

FACTSHEET

CAR 2011 E350 4Matic Estate
OWNER Reed Hitchcock
LOCATION Virginia, USA
PURCHASED May 2014
UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Torn section of leather upholstery necessitates complete replacement of a seat cushion



Our 212-series E350 4Matic wagon spends the majority of its time carrying my wife to and from her job about 30 minutes away. In my experience, that usually means that a car stays relatively clean and the other seats in the car maintain an "as new" look to them. You would think so, right? Not so much in this case.

One of the appeals when we bought this car back in 2014 was that it came with just about every available option excepting the panoramic roof. That includes full nappa leather seating surfaces instead of the far more common MB-Tex. Having previously owned a 212 with Tex seats, I am all too familiar with the common split seams that just seem to happen over time. With the leather, I reasoned, that would be a non-issue – and for a long time that proved true.

That is until about a year ago when I looked over to see a small tear in the leather on the leading edge of the passenger seat lower cushion. It was as if someone had torn along the perforated leather in a neat, straight line. Compared to the driver's seat, the passenger seat leather was somewhat hard and dried out. Admittedly, I don't condition leather seats as much as I probably should, but then in the past my seats were just fine with my regimen. Over the next several months, the tear grew – in multiple directions. In a car that I am strictly verboten from selling, that was simply unacceptable.

△ **Fully loaded E-Class serves as Reed's wife's daily commuter.**

Sitting pretty

I spoke to an upholsterer who told me that he may be able to sew in a new piece of leather, but wasn't at all sure if he could find the matching leather nor whether the seat heating elements might be an issue. I also contacted a leather repair specialist who said that he could do "something" with it but could not guarantee that it would look like new.

◁▽ **Original leather upholstery had seen better days...**

▽ **Fitting an entire new lower seat cushion was the best option.**

When he sent photos of some work he had previously done on perforated leather, I politely declined.

Finally, I thought maybe I could find a used seat and just swap it out. Perusing listings online I found that several breakers sell 212-chassis seats in pieces as opposed to complete units. That, in turn, prompted me to look up how the seats come apart. Through the power of YouTube, I found a video demonstrating how the lower seat cushion actually comes out of the car with relative ease. Hmm…

After an exhaustive internet search and evaluating the relative condition of various lower passenger seat cushions, I found one that matched my car and looked in good condition for $225 (about £177) delivered. While I built up the courage to tackle the job, I cleaned, conditioned and re-conditioned the leather on my new seat cushion.

I re-watched the video about 30 times and then finally set to work. The removal process is a matter of taking out the front seat storage box and then two Torx bolts that hold the cushion down. From there it's just a matter of unplugging the various electrical bits (no small task and requiring loads of patience!) and sliding the cushion out. Replacement is the reverse of removal, except that the bracket that holds the storage box to the seat is riveted in place, and my new seat came without. I drilled out the rivets on the old seat, removed the bracket, and set about attaching it to the new seat.

After poking around my workroom, I finally found four bolts that could hold the bracket securely in place. Then I simply reconnected the wires, slid the cushion into place, attached the storage box and *voila!* Perfection. Now I just need to figure out what to do with all the buttons and switches losing their finish.

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C123 230CE 1985, 190,000 miles, metallic silver blue, automatic, blue cloth interior, sunroof, pillar-less, family owned since 1985. Current MOT. £5,000. Tel: 07973 563777. Cambridge. ***[FGW28]***

E63 Premium Saloon 2017, four-litre V8 biturbo, four-door, petrol, 4Matic+, EU6-compliant with stop/start and 612ps. Ghost immobiliser. Rare cream leather interior, 77,000 miles, MOT February 2025, service history. £37,950 OVNO. Tel: 07917 416564. Chorley, Lancashire. ***[FGW25]***

GLE350d AMG Diesel, automatic, private registration not included! Allow 7 days or so to remove private plate. Lady owner, only 26,897 miles from new, bought from main dealers Evans Halshaw in York, service history etc, £26,950. Tel: 07831 523271. Durham. ***[FGW24]***

300CD Coupe 1984, RHD, not California import, five-speed manual with first series W124 R603 six-cylinder diesel engine, in grey primer ready for repainting. £3,750. Tel: 07737 447566. Suffolk. ***[FG]***

S350d AMG Premium Facelift model, 2018, one owner, 45,000 miles, FMBSH, arguably the 'best car in the world', drives like silk, simply stunning throughout, glass panoramic roof, 360 cameras, 20-inch alloys, PX up or down, £32,950. Tel: 01323 741891. East Sussex. ***[FGW22]***

CLK240 This car benefits from a smooth but punchy V6 engine that is great in Comfort mode and then more of a beast when in Sport mode. The inside is immaculate with original Mercedes mats. The leather interior is in great condition, £3,200 ONO. Tel: 07872 538823. West Midlands. ***[FGW21]***

R129 SL500 1992, well presented non-catalytic converter model dark blue with tan interior. Well documented service and maintenance records and invoices. Very good soft top, roll bar and wind deflector. Immobiliser and alarm. Two keys. MOT until 10/24. 104,000 miles. £7,500. Tel: 07970 989051 or 01873 853435. Abergavenny. ***[FGW18]***

SL500 2003, FSH, full MOT, two keys, new AMG alloys, recent tyres, private plate included, 93,000, red leather, selling very cheap due to fuse/relay issue, still drives well but displays false alarms due to electrical problem. £3,995. Tel: 07485 749696. Plymouth. ***[FGW17]***

R129 SL First registered 10/03/1993, currently 130,000 miles, MOT until June 2025, in the 23 years of ownership it has been regularly serviced by a known and respected Mercedes dealership, £6,000 ONO. Tel: 07770 914781. Richmond. ***[FGW23]***

310D T1 van 1994, 2.9 diesel, 140,000 miles, professional conversion to camper van, sofa/double bed, four-burner gas hob, three-way fridge, shower, WC compartment with who, inverter, storage and hanging cupboards, fly screens, curtains, bike rack, Fiamma wind -out awning. £3,750. Tel: 0773 7447566. Suffolk. ***[FGW26]***

CL500 1998, with only 35,250 miles authenticated by previous MOTs, Brabus wheels and exhaust. MOT until May 2025, two-tone silver and black leather, light burr walnut steering wheel, dash and auto shift. CL reg included, £18,000. Tel: 07970 288908. South Wales. ***[FGW20]***

190E 2.6 Rebuilt, 92,900 miles, metallic gold, refurbished interior, over £9,000 spent, show condition, asking £11,995 ono. Tel: 07797 483619. Prestatyn, Wales. ***[FGW19]***

R129 SL280 1995, 110,000 miles, three former owners, Azurite Blue/mushroom leather, MOT August 2024. Well maintained example, full M-B/independent specialist history, hardtop stand included, owned since 2020, dry stored each winter with bespoke dust cover and battery isolator, £6,950. Tel: 0131 5579246. Edinburgh. ***[FGW16]***

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C200, as new, original condition, petrol SE, four-door saloon, manual transmission, ULEZ compliant, first registered September 30 2016, one owner from new; genuine 14,000 miles, full service history all original MOTs and receipts, to be sold with a current MOT certificate valid until November 17 2024, £18,500 ONO. Tel: 07484 668773. Cardiff. ***[FGW7]***

C200 Elegance Saloon 2007, finished in Cubanite with cloth interior. 39,435 miles from new, only 2 owners, good condition very clean, FSH. £3,250 or near offer, email anitac37@gmail.com or phone. Tel: 01884 255226. Devon. ***[FGW11]***

560SEC 1992/J-reg, last of these built, 140,000 miles, Almandine red with cream leather interior. Respray and recommissioned four years ago. Great car, happily drive it anywhere, regularly taken to car shows and meets, drives really well, £21,500 ONO. Tel: 07721 508657. Mid Beds. ***[FGW8]***

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, £11,750. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW3R]***

R230 SL350 2004, average mileage for year, 11 months MOT, many new parts, Obsidian Black/refurbished black wheels/ privacy glass, beige interior all standard equipment working including roof, dry stored, new tyres, VGC, £6,750 ono. Tel: 07786 982445. Somerset. ***[FGW9]***

S500 LWB Lorinser 63,000 miles, 1997, comprehensive service records, had major service at M-B Edinburgh including transmission service, electric heated black leather seats, electric heated reclining rear seats, rare factory Bose audio system, Command, CD, electric glass roof. Tel: 07970 529906. Edinburgh. ***[FGW12]***

CLK230 K Cabriolet Evolution 2.3-litre, red top, supercharged engine, 99,367 genuine miles, one previous lady owner, in very good overall condition. Roof and everything else works as it should. MOT until July 2024, some service history and bills, £1,395. Tel: 07785 712087. Liverpool. ***[FGW14]***

R107 280SL Registered January 1984. 91,000 miles, Signal Red, FSH, one owner for the last 15 years. In very good condition with new soft top hood and MOT until Octover 2024, comes with a new bespoke all-weather cover, £24,500. Tel: 07534 139578. Norwich. ***[FGW29]***

380SL 1984, automatic, 85,560 miles, RHD. Anthracite grey, black leather, walnut trim, rear seat, extensive and interesting history, three previous owners, current (M-B Club member) 23 years, historic tax class (MOT, ULEZ, tax exempt). Repainted, bills of £12K+ excluding servicing, garaged with dehumidifier, original service handbook toolkit, hardtop stand, custom cover, £19,950. Tel: 07876 744320 Romford. ***[EFW18]***

SL500 Silver, excellent condition, FSH, three owners, 54,000 miles, dry stored, £6,000. Tel: 07519 919802. Birmingham. ***[FGW4]***

C123 280CE 1983, 80,000 miles, automatic, flat Sahara Beige, olive cloth interior, ESR, air con, excellent chrome, M-B splashguards, spare wheel, tools, triangle, M-B first aid kit, history, £12,500. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW2R]***

W124 200E Avantgarde 1990, metallic silver blue, automatic, spares or repair, £450. Tel: 07737447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW4R]***

W123 300CD Saloon 1981, auto, ascot charcoal cloth upholstery, solid, unmolested, no rust, approximately 120,000 miles. £950. Tel: 07737447556. Suffolk. ***[FG]***

W116 450SE 1979, 95,000 miles, automatic, metallic magnetite blue, bamboo leather interior, air con, excellent chrome, Mercedes-Benz splashguards, owner's wallet, histories, spare wheel, tools, jack, M-B first aid kit, fire extinguisher, £12,750. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW1R]***

W201 190E 1990, Arctic White, automatic, very good blue block cloth interior, ESR, spare wheel, M-B splashguards, tools, hack, triangle, first aid kit, bills and history, £2,650. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW5R]***

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, £2,850. Tel: 07737 447556. Suffolk. ***[EFW6R]***

CL500 2012, CL63 look-alike and go-alike, MSL tuned to 520bhp and 623lb ft, superb condition inside and out, 71,000 miles, black on black with carbon mirrors and spoiler, sounds awesome, was Cat N due to front bumper and left front wing, but nothing underneath. Four new Continental tyres. Tel: 07506 713850. Lincoln. ***[EFW9]***

SL55 AMG 2006, 34,000 miles from new. Silver with light grey interior, full service history, Bose audio, just serviced, 12 months MOT, £24,500. Tel: 07939 038875. Gloucs. ***[EFW17]***

380SL 1984, automatic, 85,560 miles, RHD. Anthracite grey, black leather, walnut trim, rear seat, extensive and interesting history, three previous owners, current (M-B Club member) 23 years, historic tax class (MOT, ULEZ, tax exempt). Repainted, bills of £12K+ excluding servicing, garaged with dehumidifier, original service handbook toolkit, hardtop stand, custom cover, £19,950. Tel: 07876 744320. Romford. ***[EFW18]***

R107 1975, LHD excellent original condition Topaz brown, brown soft top, mushroom MB-Tex interior, rare manual gearbox, original Becker Monza radio/cassette player, original 14-inch alloy wheels, all tools and manuals, only two owners from the same family, 71,000 miles. Tel: 07963 682843. Manchester. ***[EFW7]***

230TE 1988, auto, estate, 73,000 miles, MOT, many extras including alloys, cruise control etc. Many new parts: gearbox, exhaust, radiator, battery, water pump. Runs very well. Water leak (head gasket?). £Offers. Swap for a Volvo 245 estate or similar. Tel: 01277 200530. ***[EF]***

260E Automatic, only 36,000 miles, great condition car with a lot of work done mechanically, new alternator, exhaust, brakes, super smooth driving Jersey car, from new. Tel: 07797 921695. Jersey. ***[EFW14]***

CLS400 AMG Individual 2015, 3.5-litre turbo, 330bhp, 480Nm torque, six-cylinder petrol engine, ULEZ-free, owned for three years, last owner for six years, no expense spared, full MB dealer S/H, (dealer print out available), HPI clear, full MOT, two keys. Tel: 07434 555550. Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. ***[EFW5]***

CLK 200 2004, 87,000 miles. Automatic, sunroof. Power driver seat with memory. FSH. MOT to February 2025, £2,500. Tel: 07831 639870.St Albans. ***[EFW100]***

SL500 Convertible 2002 (52 reg). Automatic and petrol with only 42,331 miles. MOT until May 2025. Well maintained and drives nicely. Has been kept as part of a private collection. Please ask for more photos. £6,250. Tel: 07889 364 017. Binfield.

E220CDI Elegance 2001 Manual saloon. Spotless fabric interior, polished walnut. One family owned since new, engine amazing and kept clean. Not driven in the rain, garaged, showroom condition as new with all original kit. 83,737m MoT March. £10,000. Tel: 01793731669. Wiltshire.

W202 C43 AMG In blue looks green in sunlight. Family owned from new until early this year. Recommissioned had thousands spent. All receipts including old tax discs. Bodywork in great shape no rust garaged since 2000. Blue leather, sunroof, cruise control, v good condition, 109k. £9900. Tel: 07564217814. Kent.

SLK230 1998 convertible sports car. Beautiful condition, only 32232 miles on the clock. Recently passed MoT with no issues. Kept off road in garage on charge in Cardiff. Not currently taxed. At £2995 is great vfm for right buyer. Tel: 07456 208863. Cardiff.

350SLC 1972. Not convertible, repainted. New sills all welding done. Many new parts, finished in Icon Gold with black leather, 70000 miles. £13995. Tel: 07503 739538. London.

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E220 21TD COUPE KV11ZHK 2011 10 month MOT 107000 MLS. No rust, good cond. V good on mpg. Goes well met grey. Contact for more details. £3495. Tel: 07501611360. Doncaster.

Rare RHD diesel Unmolested. Starts ok. Int good, ext will need minor repair. Needs brake hoses at cylinders and exhaust manifold (about £200 online). I've got 8 other Mercedes, I'm not going to finish this so I'm looking for a change. Tel: 07522585643. Cardiff.

W113 280SL 1969, RHD, Silver Blue with black MB-Tex. Automatic with power steering and matching hardtop with Becker Mexico radio/cassette player. Recent restoration with extensive documentation. Concours winner. £190,000. Tel: 01227 701088. Kent. ***[DEW3]***

S350L 2005. 52692 miles. M.O.T. July 2025. Everything works. Old man retiring from driving. Best offer secures. Phone Ray for full details and photos. Email ronjones3@btinternet.com Tel: 07712361430. London.

SL320 1999, a stunning example in the elusive Amber Red, only 47,000 miles on the clock, owned by me for over 10 years, with four total, full cream nappa leather interior, a full service history, serviced very frequently in miles and recently along with an MOT, £20,000. Tel: 01322 336202. Dartford. ***[CM47W4R]***

300SE 1989 Grey with cream leather interior, wonderful condition with great service history, solid with no rust, all chrome is rust-free and everything works as it should, just under 100,000 miles, a fabulous example, genuine buyers only, £7,375. Tel: 07973 344201. Midlands. ***[CM47W7R]***

SLK230 Automatic, blue, first registered 12/07/2000, two lady owners, present owner from 2005, 61,000 miles. MOT until November 2024, very good condition. Lovely looking car, bodywork excellent, wheels resprayed, great to drive, garaged throughout, selling as the car is now not used, £2,950. Tel: 07729 566318. Ash Vale, Surrey. ***[CM47W3R]***

230CE Automatic, 1979, 152,258 miles, selling as project, car has been sat for a few years, needs a bit of bodywork and welding but majority of work was done by previous owner. Car is also tax and MOT exempt, comes with original paperwork and logbook, £3,500 Tel: 07859 185522. Birmingham. ***[CM47W10R]***

CLK 3.2 litre engine, electric soft top, automatic, registered 16/7/2000, for restoration or spares, starts. £POA. Tel: 07392 713472. Glasgow. ***[DE]***

C215 CL55 AMG 2002, low mileage (82,000), FSR, MOT November 2024, auto, fully loaded, double glazed, heated/cooled seats, bi-xenon headlights, keyless entry/ignition, first to see will buy, loss of storage forces sale, £8,500. Tel: 07584 020272, Whyteleafe, Surrey. ***[DW11]***

C43 AMG Automatic, 1998, unfinished project, I've run out of funds, being sold for spares or a project for someone with a welder. Dismantled for body corrosion repairs, good engine and gearbox, contact seller for further information. Tel: 01474 703701. Gravesend. ***[CM47W1R]***

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]***

A-Class AMG 104,000 miles, good condition throughout. Tel: 07552 497917. Leighton Buzzard. ***[LAP10]***

320CE Cabriolet Sportline 1993, gold with mushroom leather and brown hood. Needs recommissioning, easy winter project. £4,995 more pictures available on WhatsApp or call. Tel: 07936 151814. ***[CM46P3R]***

E220 Cabriolet 1995, beautiful condition with comprehensive service history, 109,400 miles. The car looks and drives perfectly and has recently had new brakes/discs, new Goodyear tyres and refurbished alloys. Grey leather interior also in great condition and heated front seats. Tel: 07902 433000. ***[DEW10]***

280SL 1984, 101,000 miles, Signal Red with Palomino interior trim, walnut wash, leather steering wheel, hardtop (with stand), dark brown soft top (immaculate), lots of history and paperwork, MOT May 2024, drives very well, always garaged, lovely looking car. £22,000. Tel 07759 740515. Suffolk. ***[CM46P8R]***

CLS320 CDI Very clean inside and out, 172,000 miles on the clock, 18-inch alloy wheels. Tel: 07868 858687. Dartford. ***[LAP7]***

SL350 2008, facelift model with sports pack, 315bhp, memory climate seats with heat scarf, electric folding mirrors, front and rear parking sensors, climate control, panoramic roof, six-CD changer, two keys and much more, 72,195 miles may increase slightly, service history. Tel: 01227 272164. Kent. ***[DEW6]***

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]***

SL500 Rare 40th anniversary model in blue-green. One of 150 UK models, 18-inch AMG alloys, blue soft top, grey soft leather, panoramic roof, xenons. 83,000 miles with extensive service history, with all book packs and MOTs. Fantastic condition. Recent new wing and refurbished hood. MOT to August 2024. Tel: 07739 119783. ***[DEW9]***

190E 2.0 1992, automatic, 185,250 miles. FSH with all supporting bills, ESR, rear head rests, ALD and four electric windows. Recent new front wing, new front and centre exhaust, new battery, fuel pump, water pump, radiator, and ATF fluid changed. Everything working to come with new MOT for asking price. £3,250. Tel: 07483 149808. Northallerton. ***[CM46P2R]***

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190E 2.3-16 Champagne Silver. My son and I bought this car as a restoration project, but have to accept it is beyond us. Will need more time and money than we have. 175,000 miles, the engine at some point was restored. £7,995. Tel: Mike 01730 892697. Petersfield, Hampshire. ***[DEW2]***

CLK200 1.8 Kompressor Cabriolet Avantgarde 2008 (08 reg), 91,500 miles, 1.8 petrol, 184hp, MOT May 2024, five-speed Tiptronic automatic, comprehensive SH including 7 service stamps. Car came from Edinburgh £3,990. Tel: 07947 730561. Bradford ***[DEW4]***

SL350 V6 with AMG sport pack, 2013 facelift model. 60,000 miles, full M-B service history, Obsidian Black paint and black leather piped white – excellent example. ***[BCW12]***

INTERNATIONAL MERCEDES

SL60 AMG 1998 Only 49 RHD, 24,500 miles, panoramic hardtop, fantastic drive! Tel: +49 1739514613. Waldkirchen, Germany. ***[FGW13]***

560SEL Delivered new to US Embassy in Canberra in 1989. Fully optioned including reclining rear seats, outstanding condition, AU$38,000. Tel: +61 439856997. Athelstone, Australia. ***[EFW19]***

560SEL 1988, excellent condition throughout, most mechanical systems have been rebuilt, drives like a dream, very regrettable sale, was planning on this being my retirement car, but health reasons are causing me to retire early. In Australia. Email 1988560selaus@gmail.com best way to communicate. Tel: +61 417317202. Meredith, Victoria, Australia. ***[EFW12]***

W140 S500 1997, 153,000 miles in great condition, original silver paint, rust-free car, accessories and functions to specs. Tel: 8184379756. Los Angeles, California. ***[BCW1]***

MERC TRADER

190SL Roadster 1963, completely restored. Everything has been rebuilt, refinished or replaced. Runs and drives as new. This car is a work of art.
It would look at home in an art gallery as well as the street. The hardtop is completely restored as well. The Dove Grey soft top is a nice touch. Tel: +852 4532 7865. Pontianak, Indonesia. *[CM45P12R]*

190SL 1957, in excellent restored condition. Red with light beige interior, interior is in excellent condition, good set of tyres all around and a spare also comes with the car. The engine runs strong and is the original fitted from new. The transmission goes into gears with no problems. Tel:+812 6902 8460. Surabaya. Indonesia. *[CM45P13R]*

PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES

Genuine W202 C-Class wheel plates Four in good condition, silver, £60. Tel: 07961 380971. Romford. *[FGW10]*

Genuine AMG 20-inch alloys Refurbished and diamond cut, part numbers A2214013402, A2214013302, 8.5JX20 ET43, 9.5JX20 ET43, with Falkon Azenis 285 25 ZR20 93Y and 255 30 ZR20 92Y tyres, 5mm lowest measurement with even wear, very good condition, couple of chips on one wheel Tel: 07985 201291. Cambridgeshire. *[FGW3]*

Mercedes straight 6 crank seal New in Box, I have 16 of these, part number on photo. TEL: 07540467218. Telford.

E Class SE Line W212 Headlights 2 headlights which include the 2 Control units on each one. Two Original Mercedes OEM Headlights Part Nos. of all the Face lift W212 models which the headlights will fit from March / 03. 2013 and 2014 models. Price £1,200.00. Tel: 028 - 66341988 / 00 353 86 255 3232. Ireland.

Set of refurbished W126 flat faced alloys With very good tyres, £450. Large quantity of W123 steel wheels, some with tyres, sets of four W123 wheel trims, various colours, various W123 spares too many to list. Tel: 07747 447556. Suffolk. *[FG]*

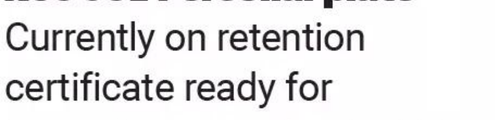
***Mercedes Enthusiast* magazines** from Jan 2015 (£4.30) to Mar 2016, all in very good order. Tel: 07447 941524. Portishead. *[FG]*

Water pump and 2x radiators one new, fits W124, £100. New track rod ends boxed, £25. New 20x wheel bolts chrome, £20. Wheel nuts x16, M12x1.5, £10. Swiss caravan s/steel kettle boxed, £15. Small car cover very good condition, £10. Google hub, new, boxed, £100. Crime mags swap for aircraft mags. Tel: 01277 200530. *[FG]*

Two fantastic numberplates Both on retention – M5500B (£1,250 ONO) and SALLUTE (£3,250 ONO). Tel: 07950 741778. *[EF]*

NO. PLATES

X60 JOE Personal plate Currently on retention certificate ready for immediate transfer, £1,800. Richard. Tel: 07967 024311. Southampton. *[FGW1]*



V8 GLX private numberplate On my GL420 for many years and now on retention. £10,000 ONO. Tel: 07973 739431. Chislehurst, Kent. *[FGW5]*

Two cherished registration plates Both on retention: 4929 H (£6,000) and 784 HRH (£2,500). Would take loss to sell pair. Tel: 07583 613521. Tamworth. *[DE]*

MOY 3D personal plate Currently on retention certificate ready for immediate transfer £600 Tel: 07967 024311. Southampton. *[FGW2]*

Two numberplates on retention NKZ 433 (£350) and S16CNS (£300), open to offers. Tel: 07980 933829 or email: nickstilwell59@gmail.com Hampshire. *[EF]*

OYY 655 registration On Retention Certificate (V778). £950. Tel: 07886 533021. Scottish Borders.

WANTED

Parts Wanted for R129 Steering idler arm bushing for a 2001 SL500 Silver Arrow. Have tried the usual parts places in the UK and Europe without success! Tel: 07359 017584. Winchester. *[FG]*

Front door locks and keys For handles on 1988 230TE (124-series). Tel: 01277 200530. *[FG]*

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Bitten by the bug

Buying a well-kept E220 from 1995 was just the latest chapter in Joe Briley's history with Mercedes-Benz, as he explains...

WORDS & IMAGES **JOE BRILEY**

Like many people my age, I spent many of my formative years in the rear-facing seats of a Volvo estate. For a young car enthusiast, this is tantamount to automotive window-shopping. At five or six years old, Tim was my best friend, and the two of us would sit in the back of the Volvo looking for cars we considered 'cool'. We knew the make and model of every car on the road. Once, as we exited a roundabout near Junction 2 of the M5 motorway, we waved at the driver of a Porsche 924. She smiled and flashed the pop-up lights, which we thought was awesome.

Tim's dad worked with a wealthy car collector, and on one sunny Saturday he arrived outside our house in a gleaming, two-tone silver R129 500SL. This was my first proper Mercedes-Benz experience. The roof was down, so Tim and I posed for a photo in the back seats. The SL must have been brand new at the time! After this experience, an aunt presented me with a matchbox 500SL, but I remember thinking 'this isn't the same'. I never did tell her, but she had bought the wrong one – it was an R107 500SL, and I thought it would be entirely ungrateful to point out the differences between the R129 and the R107 at such a young age!

△ Peak District a great place to get to know the car.

Fast forward 25 or so years and my car CV is lengthy.

Working as a freelance marketer with a specialism in classic cars means I come across many vehicles, and chop and change my daily driver at an eye-watering rate. In the last 12 months, I have run three E-Classes, including the 124-series Saloon seen here. Prior to this car there was a W210 E55 AMG (sublimely quick but rusty) and a W123 (lovely but older than me with seats like a trampoline). Oh, and a bright red 190E!

Part of what I love about buying and selling old cars is the ability to run a wide variety of vehicles and travel all over the country collecting and delivering them. The W124 came from just east of the Peak District, so we chose a beautiful sunny day to fetch it, opting to take one of the few

"The W124 came from just east of the Peak District, so we chose a beautiful sunny day to fetch it"

cars that I have held onto for some time, a 1990s 2.5-litre six-cylinder convertible – the make of which shouldn't be mentioned in the hallowed pages of *Mercedes Enthusiast*!

The W124 you see here is a 1995 E220, featuring the 2.2-litre, 148bhp, four-cylinder M111 engine. It's a two-owner car from new, and has covered 94,500 miles in its 30 years. Behind the wheel, this E220 hides its age very well. The over-engineering of Mercedes of this era is evident: everything still works and the handling still feels taut and precise.

The interior is virtually untouched, and the car feels spritely without the ungainly size and weight of the W210. On the drive back across the Peak District, it kept up superbly with the car-that-shall-not-be-named Bavarian convertible, and even when the two of us were enjoying an extra dab of the fun pedal the Mercedes didn't feel out of place, or find itself left behind.

The fact that this car lacks the usual squeaks, rattles, knocks and bangs of most 30-year-old vehicles is testament to the build quality of the W124. It's quiet and refined in the cabin, with plenty of room and a huge boot. It really is astonishing that these fantastic cars can be bought so cheaply. Having owned over 100 cars in my short 30 years on this planet, the experience of collecting the W124 and the drive back across the Peak District has to rank amongst my top five 'eBay car day road trips'.

So, will long term W124 ownership be for me? After spending some time with the car, I can't help missing the walloping power of the W210 AMG and the grin that car could muster from standstill. So no, the W124 won't be here forever, though my next Mercedes-Benz might well be a W202 C43 AMG. Watch this space.

▽ Under 95,000 miles covered since new in 1995.

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