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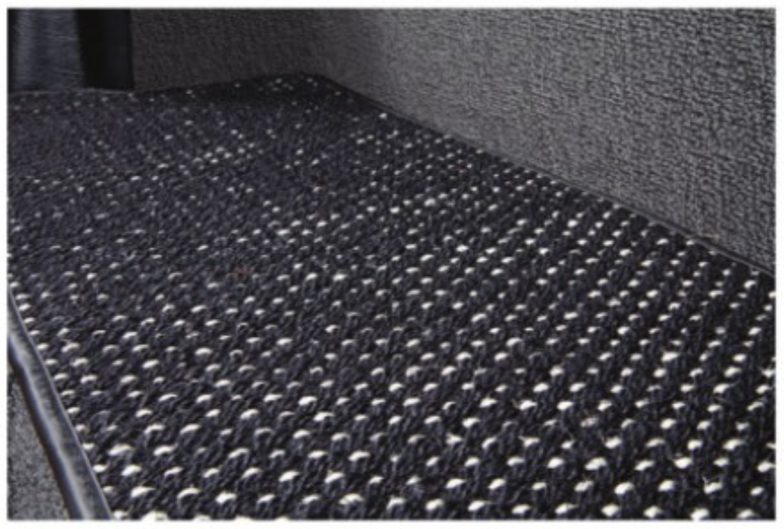
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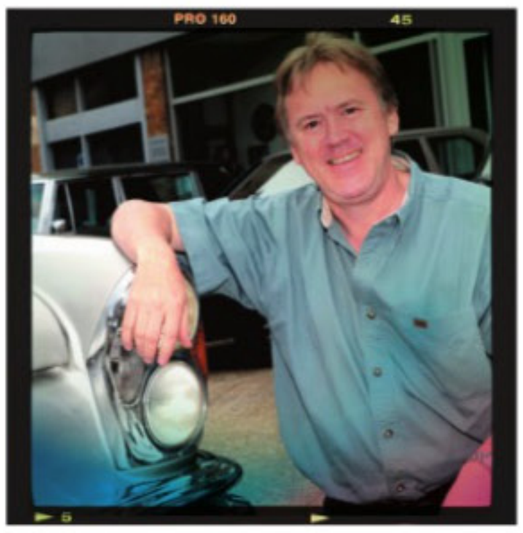
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In this issue of *Classic Mercedes*

When it comes to a tingle factor, many feel that no Mercedes does it quite like a classic SL. And to make sure we don't short change you, this issue serves up no less than six of them, from a 300SL Gullwing to a 500SL from the R129 era. My part in it was to do the 190SL, our cover story, and what a joy it was, especially one this pristine.

"THE 190SL MAY NOT HAVE THE SPORTS CAR FEEL OF ITS 300SL STABLEMATE, BUT A MORE CHARMING ROADSTER OF THE ERA IS HARD TO THINK OF"

The 190SL may not have the true sports car feel of its 300SL stablemate, but a more charming roadster of the era is hard to think of. But of course every SL generation is very different, so each has it own special appeal.

We also spend time on the 123-series estate, a fine modern classic that has, suddenly, become quite rare, with good ones remaining but hard to find. I was fascinated to learn that it almost didn't come to the UK because Mercedes thought it would be too expensive to build in right-hand drive. But it did, and 123 expert Mark Cosovich explains why.

I hope you like all this, and I'll see you in the next issue, out August 1.

David Sutherland, Editor



Who's been bringing you the classic stories in this issue



Martin Buckley
With a fair few classic Mercedes regularly passing through his hands, Martin Buckley has a pretty good idea of how much you should pay for them. In this issue's SL fest, he writes about the R129, including the two 500SLs he owned, and inevitably money comes into it. "I think it is the best value classic Mercedes you can buy, especially when you look at what good R107 SLs are," he says, "and they're in a different league to drive."



Richard Truesdell
A full rebuild of a classic tends to be measured in years, so when it leaves the restoration shop it's an exciting time for the owner – and anyone else there, such as Richard Truesdell who witnessed the handover of the fabulous 300SL Gullwing he writes about on pages 30-34. "Watching Pat Matthews collecting his Gullwing was like being at the factory in 1956 when an owner took delivery right after it rolled off the production line," he enthuses.

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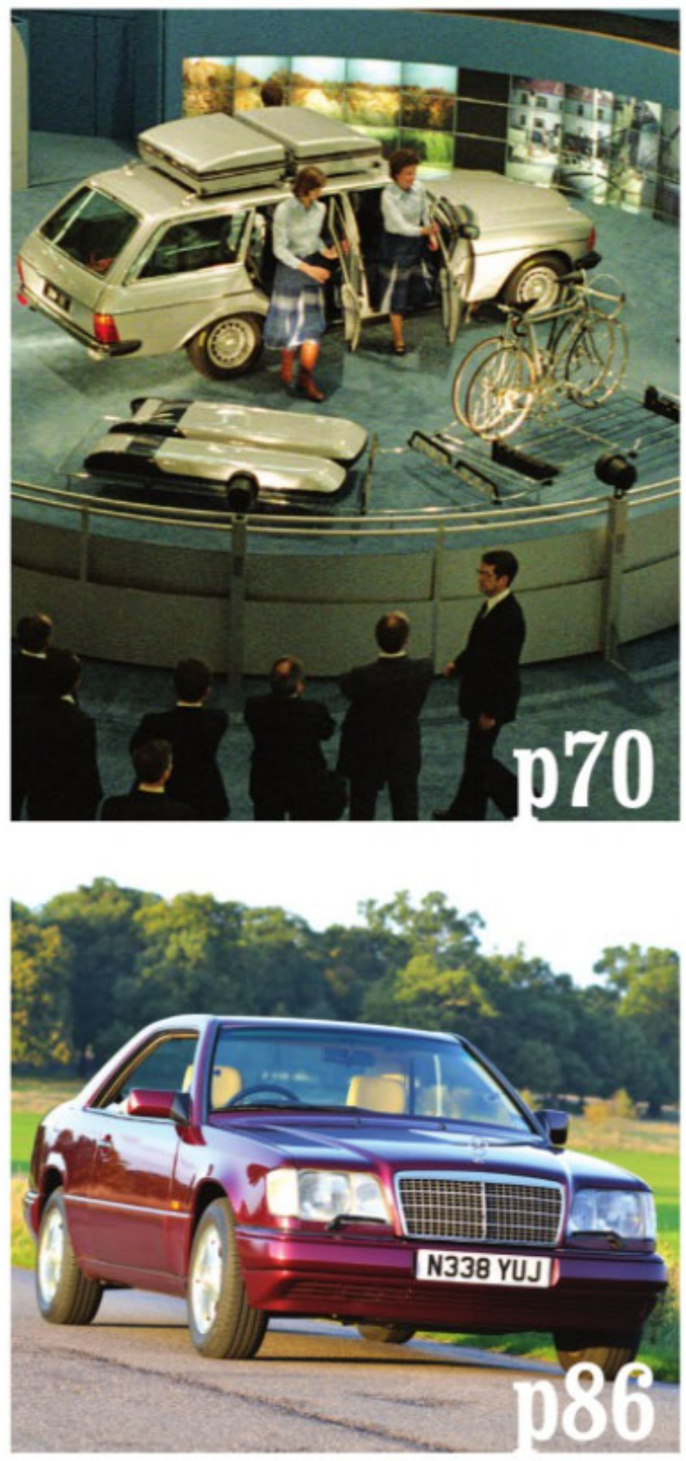
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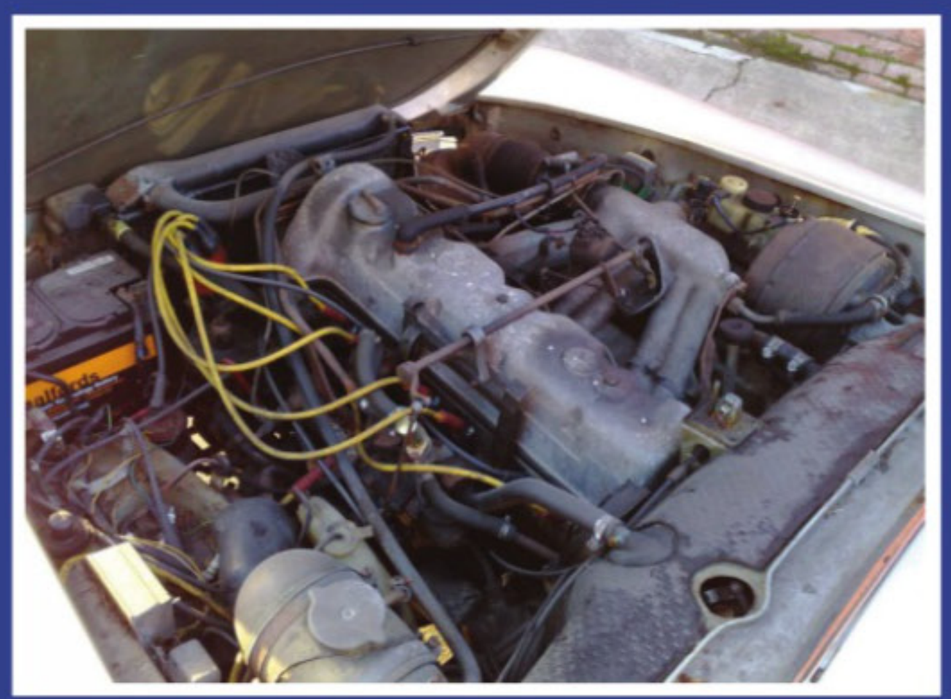








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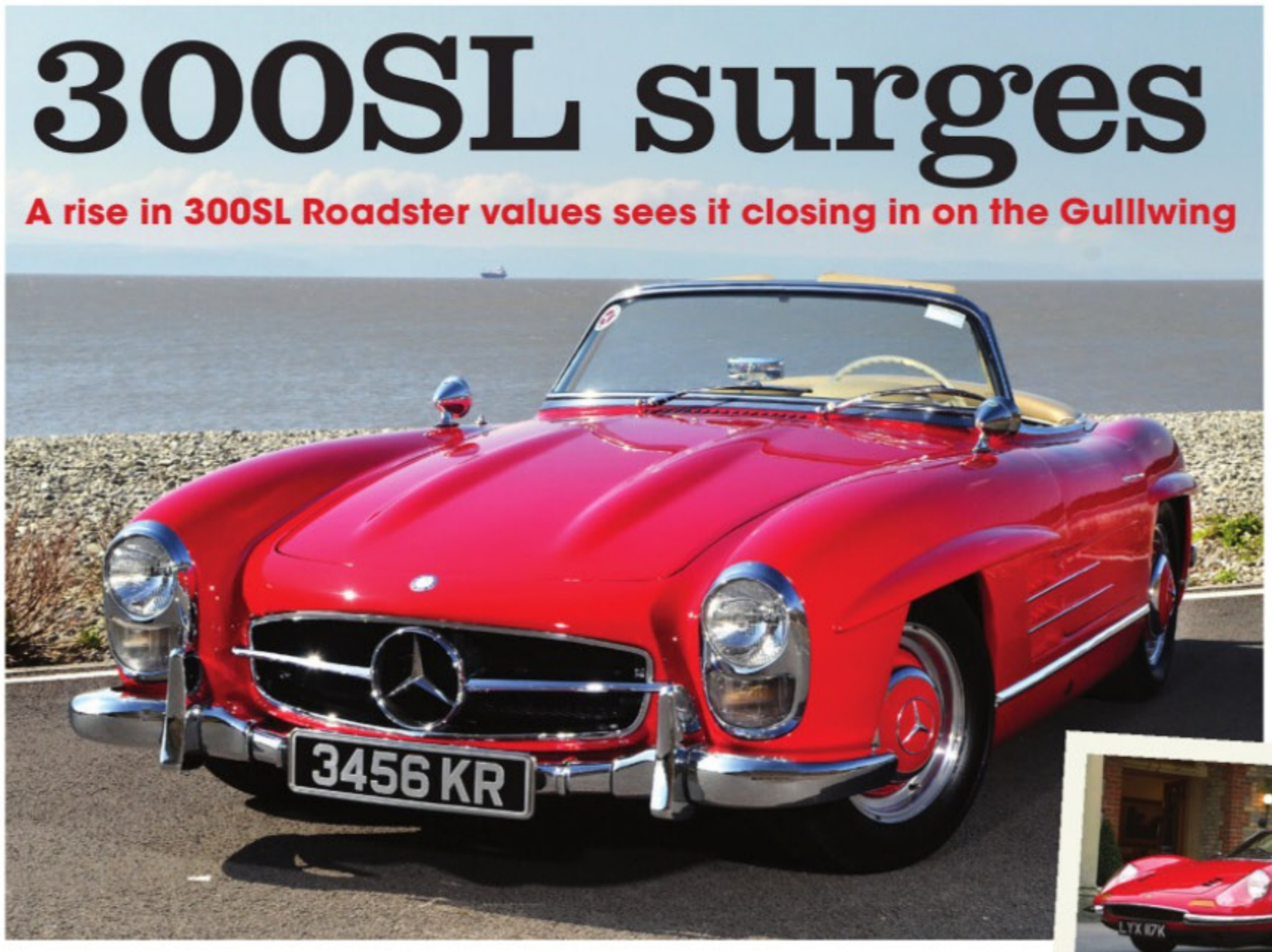
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CLASSIC NEWS

UK AND INTERNATIONAL REPORTS FROM THE CLASSIC MERCEDES WORLD

300SL surges

A rise in 300SL Roadster values sees it closing in on the Gulllwing

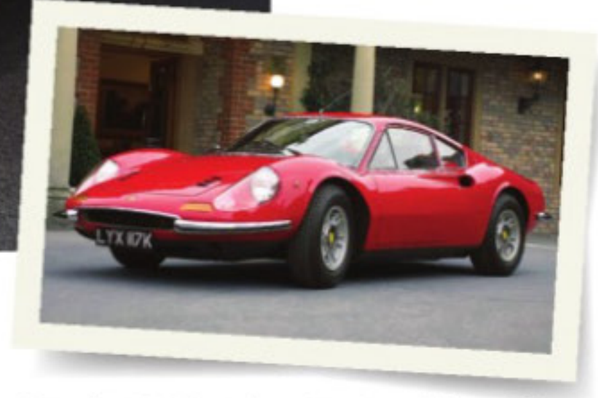


Values of the top Mercedes classics continue to soar, up 3.4 per cent in the first three months of 2014, and were so buoyant in this period that they exceeded the growth rate of Ferraris, which have shown the highest price increases recently. In the last 12 months Mercedes prices have risen 15.8 per cent, and 47 per cent in just three years.

The data comes from the Historic Automobile Group (HAGI), which tracks sale prices of high-end classics of all marques and compiles them into an index. "So far, Ferraris have done next to nothing, with 0.31 per cent growth, after 2013 when they increased 60 per cent," says HAGI's Dietrich Hatlapa. "But Mercedes prices are now much more steady."

The feeling on the auction room floor, as reported in our coverage of the recent classic car sale at the Amelia Island auction in Florida, is that the 300SL Roadster is now narrowing a price gap with the Gullwing, traditionally the most sought after post-war Mercedes classic. HAGI rates the Roadster as the one currently having the biggest impact on classic values in general, with the Ferrari 246 Dino (pictured) in second place, and the Gullwing third placed.

Arguably the potential for Mercedes prices to keep increasing is evidenced by the fact that prices of classic Porsches, also seen by many as undervalued, are way ahead of Mercedes, their January-to-March increase standing at 11.6 per cent. One very noticeable recent trend is the increased interest in 'barn find' Mercedes classics, which on occasions can fetch more at auction than a fully restored equivalent. In a Gooding & Company sale in Arizona in mid January, a pristine Gullwing sold for $1.4m (about £835,000), while an unrestored model made $495,000 (£295,000) more.



Mercedes 300SLs as investments could be catching up with the likes of the Ferrari Dino pictured here.



Work in progress

Independent specialist Cheshire Classic Benz has opened a service and repair garage in Macclesfied. This is in addition to the firm's nearby classic Mercedes sales operation, established by proprietor Pete Lewis 10 years ago.

It is staffed by Mercedes-trained mechanics, but prices are keen, Lewis promises. "We want to offer a credible alternative to the main dealer network for Mercedes drivers in the north west," he says, The labour rate is £78 per hour including VAT.

Classic racers are go

To mark its 120 years of racing, Mercedes is fielding a pair of classic saloon racers, a 220SE Fintail and a 190E 2.5-16 Evolution II, in 2014, both specially commissioned by Mercedes-Benz Classic in Germany. The 'Fintail Racer' dates from 2011 and has races under its belt, while the Evo was purchased in 2013, entering a shakedown race at the Nürburgring last September.

The 220SE is running in the Dunlop FHR Long-Distance Cup, organised by Germany's Association for Historic Motor Racing, and open to cars from 1947 to 1995, while the 190E is entered in the Youngtimer Trophy, in which 1996 to 1990 cars are eligible. Both race cars are close to road specification, which in the Evo's case means 232bhp and 181bhp.

The two race series take place on the same weekends, part of historic race meetings, with four outings for the cars in 2014. These are the Historic Trophy Nürburgring (Nordschleife, May 30-June 1), ADAC 24 Hours Classic Races (Nürburgring, June 19-22), Spa Race Festival (Spa-Francorchamps, July 18-20), and the Westfalen Trophy (Nürburgring, October 17-19).



Star prizes

Mercedes-Benz models have won six out of 19 categories in a competition run by the specialist classic car magazine in Germany, *Motor Klassik*, in which readers' votes determine the rankings. The car maker's five vehicle prizes were for road and racing cars in various classes, spanning no less than six decades.

Two were for Silver Arrows racers, the pre-war W25 and 1950s W196R, both of which dominated the sport in their eras. The 1920s' supercharged Mercedes SSK (pictured) and 1954 300SL Gullwing were winners in the sports car class – although the latter had to share the honours with the BMW 507, which received an equal number of votes. The G-Wagen, still in production after 35 years, was named the best classic of the future in the off-road category.

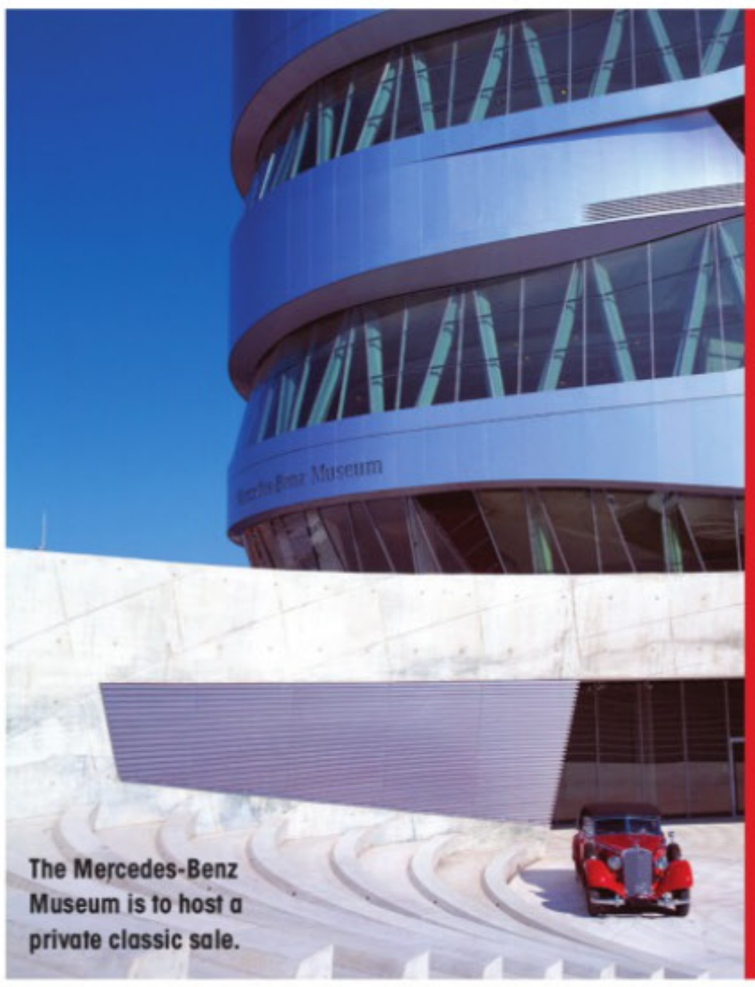
The sixth category win was for Mercedes as the Best Brand, thanks to the wide range of parts for older Mercedes, supplied through official dealers and the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Fellbach in Germany.



The SSK collects an award from a German car mag.



The same title also bestows the Gullwing with a gong.



The Mercedes-Benz Museum is to host a private classic sale.

Private function

On July 12 auctioneer Bonhams will temporarily take over the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart for the sale of some 40 valuable, privately owned Mercedes models, including some pre-1926 vehicles, when Mercedes and Benz were separate marques, such as a 1909 Mercedes 35hp.

The event will be strictly private and the number of participants restricted, says Mercedes-Benz Classic, which is jointly organising the event with the London auctioneer. Mercedes and Bonhams have collaborated on sales of classics since the early 1990s, and the job of selling a W196R Silver Arrows at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in July 2013 fell to Bonhams, the racer achieving £19.6m. But this is its first exclusively Mercedes sale.

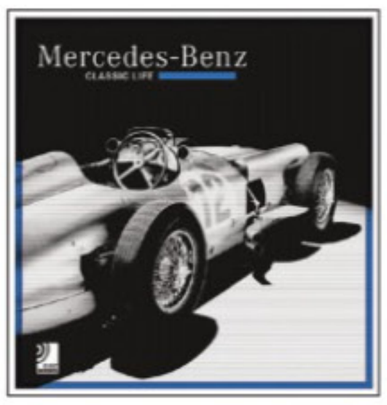
Pre-war sale lots include a 1936 Mercedes-Benz 540K Cabriolet A, and a 1935 500K, with 1950s entrants a 220 Cabriolet and a 220S Coupe. Other cars in the sale include a 1965 600 and a 1971 280 SE Cabriolet. No vehicles from the Museum's own collection will be auctioned, Mercedes felt it necessary to point out.

Bookshelf A look at recently published Mercedes titles

Mercedes-Benz Classic Life

Price €49.90 **Publisher** Mercedes-Benz Classic
Contact www.mbclassiclife.com

Those wishing a detailed record of classic events run by Mercedes-Benz might like *Mercedes-Benz Classic Life*. 216 pages in both English and German text, it concentrates on 2013, with reports on classic races and record runs, plus there are interviews with racing luminaries, and other features.

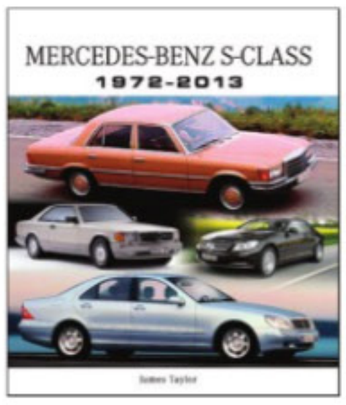


It is published by Mercedes-Benz Classic in Germany and priced at €49.90 (about £41), but the package also includes a vinyl record with eight jazz tracks. It can be ordered at www.mbclassiclife.com or purchased at the shop in the Mercedes-Benz Museum.

Mercedes-Benz S-Class 1972-2103

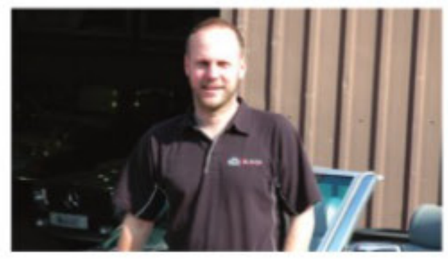
Price £25 **Publisher** The Crowood Press
Contact www.crowood.com

Long-serving car journalist and historian James Taylor has chronicled the story of the Mercedes S-Class, the first of which was the 1972 to 1980 116-series. The 208-page *Mercedes-Benz S-Class 1972-2103* gives the background to the development, the full production history and complete specification details of that model, and then does the same for three of the S-Class generations that followed.



These are the 126- and 140-series saloons and coupes, the 220- and 215-series coupes, and the 221s, launched in 2005.

In other news...



Screen test

The SL Shop in Redditch, Worcestershire, has been helping TV presenter Quentin Willson make an episode of *The Classic Car Show* which will feature the R107-series SL. "We were asked to provide a very good early car, a good late, end-of-line car, and one worth £4,000 to £5,000 to show that they can also be affordable for an owner," says The SL Shop's Sam Bailey (pictured).

GP trio for UK

At the 2014 Goodwood Festival of Speed, on June 26 to 29, Mercedes-Benz is to display the three 1914 4.5-litre cars that scored a one-two-three victory in the French grand Prix 100 years ago. The Festival's overall theme is 'Addicted to Winning – the Unbeatable Champions of Motor Sport'.

Old oil

Yorkshire-based oil specialist Millers Oils has introduced its High Performance Classic 20w50 NT, a fully synthetic formula designed for older engines. "Many classic car owners don't realise that most post-war cars run just as well, if not better, on modern synthetic oils as they do on mineral oils," says Nevil Hall, the firm's managing director.

In court

The organisers of the 2014 Concours of Elegance at Hampton Court, on September 5 to 7, have launched a website containing all relevant details of the event (attendance is £25 per person per day), including the classic cars set for display. Go to concoursofelegance.co.uk.







Spring joy

This major concours event brought together some of America's top classics, while high prices were realised at the associated auctions, Richard Truesdell reports

IMAGES Eric Fairchild/Brian Henniker/Mathieu Heurtault/Rashba.com/David Temple

Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

Location Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island, Florida
When March 6-8, 2014

AUCTIONS

Unrestored classics can now sometimes make more than pristine cars

While the RM Auctions event is the official sale of the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, Gooding & Company had a huge presence at Amelia Island at a separate event held at the nearby Omni Amelia Island Plantation. The star of Gooding's 2014 sale, as far as Mercedes-Benz enthusiasts were concerned, was the 1964-registered 300SL Roadster that sold for $2,035,000 (about £1,230,000), slightly exceeding the high side of its pre-auction estimate. Documented as one of the last 300SLs delivered, it features disc brakes and an aluminium alloy cylinder block. It showed less than 50,000 miles, and followed recent trends giving original, unrestored 300SLs a price premium over highly restored, concours winning examples, and even cars enjoying celebrity provenance.

Despite rapidly rising prices over the last two years, many experts believe that 300SLs, both Gullwings and Roadsters, remain undervalued in the current market when compared to Ferraris. The significant difference between late 1950s and early 1960s production Ferrari 250 models is that 300SLs were produced in greater numbers than their Italian counterparts, although not by quite as much as one would think.



BELOW
Though unrestored, this 300SL (also above) broke £2m, above its estimate.

What is noteworthy is that the gap between Gullwings and Roadsters has all but disappeared. Expect to see the best 300SLs, when they come to market, to command ever escalating prices – the day of buying a 300SL, Gullwing or Roadster, at a 'reasonable' price are surely all but over, especially with the current frenzy for unrestored, barn find and 'original' examples.

Not every 300SL is a seven-figure car, but it almost seems that way as Gooding offered a 1957 Mercedes-Benz 300SL roadster that, while overshadowed by the first example, returned $946,000 (£571,000), just under its pre-auction estimate. Presented in an unusual medium







green hue, this car will likely seem a true bargain 12 months from now.

But big price tags were not attached only to 300SLs, with the regal 1950s 300S and Sc models continuing their appreciation curve. A very well presented silver 1955 300Sc Roadster topped out at $990,000 (£598,000), just under its top estimate. It is far from unusual for 300SL owners to also have one or more 300S and Sc models parked in their garages.

While 190SLs have been rising in price, one Gooding offering failed to meet its pre-auction estimate. A pretty, light blue with white removable hardtop 190SL offered without reserve sold for $143,000 (£86,300), almost $30,000 below its lower reserve. This might have been due to its estimate being aggressive, because the selling price was in line with other recent sales of 190SLs in comparable condition.

With prices rising for W111 coupes and cabriolets, it came as no surprise that Gooding's 1964 220SEb Cabriolet exceeded its minimum pre-auction estimate, hammering at $77,000 (£46,500), almost in the middle of its estimate. Although not a concours winner, this Paul Bracq-designed six-cylinder convertible is also likely to look like a bargain a year or two down the road, as top-tier W111 cabriolets, especially V8s, are now solidly in the quarter million dollar category, such as the 1971 280SE 3.5 Cabriolet that sold for $297,000 (£179,200) at RM's January auction in Scottsdale.

The final Gooding Amelia Island Mercedes was a very elegant 1960 220SE Cabriolet finished in a stunning blue with red interior, crossing the block at $170,000 (£102,600), a little short of its estimate. The message from Amelia Island? All prices continue to rise, with 300SL Gullwings and Roadsters leading the way.

CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE

It was pre-war Mercedes models that raised the biggest wow factor at the 2014 event

In its 19th year, the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance honoured both racing driver Jochen Mass and the cars he drove in a competition career in Formula 1 and sports car racing spanning 1972 to 1989. Some of his greatest triumphs came behind the wheel of Mercedes-Benz powered cars, including his 1989 win at Le Mans in a Sauber Mercedes C9.

For many Mercedes enthusiasts, the headliner was the 1928 Mercedes 680S Torpedo Roadster with coachwork by Carrosserie J Saoutchik. Owned by Craig and Susan McCaw of Santa Barbara, California, it won the coveted Mercedes-Benz Star of Excellence Award as the Most Elegant Mercedes-Benz at the show. A recent addition to their collection, this car, which was displayed at the 1929 New York Auto Salon, was built not long after the merger of Mercedes and Benz in 1926. It represented the mechanical state of the art of its era, and when combined with the elegant coachwork provided by Saoutchik, France, it stands today as an automotive work of art.

Other award-winning Mercedes at Amelia Island included John D Groendyke's 1935 500K Cabriolet A. It won Best in Class in the Mercedes-Benz Supercharged category. Best in Class among non-supercharged Mercedes-Benzes from 1927 to 1946 was the 1939 540K Special Roadster owned by Richard E Workman. In the post-war Mercedes class the 1955 300SL Gullwing owned by Lynn and Michael Harling who came all the way from Dallas, Texas, went away with the class win. The separate Amelia Award for the top Mercedes from 1947 to 1972 went to Garry and Victoria Peters from West Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada for their 1963 300SL Roadster.

While it didn't win any class awards, one of the most interesting post-war Mercedes automobiles on display at Amelia Island was the 1953 Kircher Special. It was originally powered by a modified Jaguar XK120 engine, but in 1955, in an attempt to keep it competitive, the drivetrain was changed to one from a Gullwing – but, the Ferrari-like open sports car still could not compete with more modern and more powerful competitors. Noteworthy is its unusual two-piece light alloy body. CM

ABOVE
Some wonder if the 300S will be the next Mercedes classic to rocket in price.

ABOVE LEFT
This 300SL proved you can still buy a 300SL for under a million dollars – just.

TOP
A fabulous 1928 680S Torpedo Roadster judged the Most Elegant in show.

"DESPITE RAPIDLY RISING PRICES OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, MANY EXPERTS BELIEVE THAT 300SLs REMAIN UNDERVALUED IN THE CURRENT MARKET WHEN COMPARED TO FERRARIS"

BELOW
Kircher Special from 1953 has alloy bodywork and an engine from a Gullwing.



Sun stars

The standard of Mercedes classics that turned out for this annual Middle East event was once again most impressive, reports Dave Saunders

IMAGE Dave Saunders

Emirates Classic Car Festival

Location Downtown Dubai
When February 27 – March 3, 2014

A shining line of Mercedes-Benzes glittered beneath the golden Dubai sun at this year's Emirates Classic Car Festival. Organised by Emaar Properties in association with the Automobile and Touring Club of the UAE (ATCUAE), a member of FIVA, the event was staged along the boulevard skirting the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building.

Growing each year, the sixth edition of the show attracted over 300 cars, 50 per cent up on last year. Best of Show was awarded to a superbly prepared 1970 280SE. Having been restored in Germany by Brabus, the cabriolet was maintained in Dubai by Frederik Faidhi

Imtiaz Shaikh of the Tomini Group earned the European Car Award for a 1959 220S Cabriolet (pictured), while the Club Merit Award went to Mohammed Al Tahiri for his 280SL Pagoda. "I now own 27 Mercedes between 1956 and 1986, and I work on all the cars myself," he revealed. "Mercedes parts are easy to obtain here, thanks to the brand's importance in our history."



On show

As in previous years, Mercedes-Benz and independent exhibitors made this huge show the best classic car destination in Europe, Eric Richardon believes

IMAGES Eric Richardson

Techno Classica

Location Essen, Germany
When March 26-30, 2014

For those with a love of star cars, there surely cannot have been a better place to be than in the vast halls of Essen's Techno Classica, where from March 26 to 30 Mercedes presented one of the most impressive gatherings of iconic competition cars ever to be seen. Under the title Magical Moments – 120 Years of Motorsport, the car maker offered visitors the perfect opportunity to get up close and personal with competition machinery from its huge collection, from the most recent Formula 1 cars through to one of the very earliest Simplex models. Such was the scope of the display – pre- and post-war, rallying, trucks and off-road vehicles as well as a superb collection of DTM machinery – that one wag commented, "I'm glad I didn't try to visit their museum this week, there must be nothing left in it!"

Some exhibitors sharing Hall One with this dominating display may have been anxious, but the various single make clubs certainly stepped up to the mark, with displays such as the Unimog 425 to celebrate 40 years of the model. For those keen on restoration work, a part-completed Ponton drew the eye, while the peepers widened for the stunning looking W116 450SEL sitting on polished Penta alloys, which was receiving a lot of interest.

In a show where one can even become rather blasé about the 300SL, it takes something different to stir the heart, but the 300SL Club managed to do that with the 300SLS-Porter. Built from a fire damaged 300SL in the 1950s by Chuck Porter in America, it was then raced both in period and at more recent historic race meetings.

If, however, the 300SLS was a little too dainty for your needs, then the G4 (W31) based Gepackwagen, with a double rear axle, was the toy to have. Although not original, most of its contemporaries having been lost during World War Two, this recreation was as impressive as it was intimidating in terms of its sheer size, although curiously the interior carried a beautifully ornate dash.

Outdoors, the private sales areas didn't seem to be doing too well at all, with very few 'sold' signs on display. A €17,900 price tag (about £14,760) for a well-presented W114 280 might seem high, but against €49,000 (£40,400) for a 350SLC within the halls it seemed a positive bargain. As an exercise in dreaming, or simply unwinding with a beer and an unfeasibly large bratwurst and enjoying a good laugh at the show prices, Techno Classica simply can't be bettered. CM





LEFT A beautiful 450SEL on special alloys attracted a great deal of attention.

ABOVE This 300SLR was part of Mercedes' wonderful display of historic racers.

Sale points

Two affordable classics that we saw recently

Bonhams/Historics at Brooklands

◆ **The £13,552 that this well preserved 450SEL 6.9 achieved at the Historics at Brooklands sale in March is a further sign of the increasing collectability of the flagship 116-series model. With one owner for the last 10 years, this example is good enough to have served as a VIP shuttle car at the Goodwood Revival, and also to have been on displayed at Mercedes-Benz World.**



◆ **While prices of the V8-engined W111 280SE 3.5 Cabriolet are running away, prices of the earlier, four-cylinder coupes are more affordable, such as the 1965 220SEb sold by Bonhams at its sale in Oxford in March for £16,100, some £4,000 below its minimum estimate. The Ruby Red car was described as being in good condition, with much recent work carried out on it.**



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Letters

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High quality Michelins are essential for a 450SEL 6.9, an owner informs us.

Tread carefully

As an owner of both a 300SEL 6.3 and a 450SEL 6.9 I enjoyed your articles on 'hot saloons' in the Winter edition that featured these models. However, I noted that the New Zealand owner of the 6.9 seemed to recommend "budget" Chinese tyres as a suitable alternative to the correct Michelins. He also stated that he drove his 6.9 at over 100mph "on occasions".

I feel this apparent recommendation could be misleading. The Michelin XWX (not XAS as stated) was built specially for the 6.9 and a Ferrari of the time. It is a V-rated tyre with immensely strong sidewalls to cope with the power and torque being transmitted. They are expensive, but for the full performance of a 6.9, the only type suitable. Compromising with cheap tyres is not only potentially dangerous but could have implications with insurers.

Ian Keers OBE, Mercedes-Benz Club

Brake point

In the article on the US-spec R107 450SL you mention the odd placement of the parking brake and footbrake in comparison to the European models. Having seen some European imports with the foot pedal type of parking brake, I am inclined to suggest that the central handbrake is unique to right-hand drive cars.

North Americans who ordered a 450SL for factory delivery found that their cars were supplied with a 350SL badge, and were told that the American dealer would attach the 450 badge once the car arrived Stateside. Apparently Mercedes-Benz did not want the heat from the local burghers who might pester the factory for a 4.5-litre engine (The 450SL was not delivered in Europe until two years into production, in 1973).

Louis F Fourie, West Vancouver, Canada

We checked the Daimler photo archive for European left-hand drive models, and it would seem you are correct! Now we know.


Euro-spec R107s have a foot-operated park brake.

Rare treat

As the proud owner of a 1991, US-specification W201 2.3, I read with interest your fine article, 'Six appeal' on the 190E 2.6 in the Spring issue of *Classic Mercedes*. You note in the article that only about 100,000 2.6s were built, making it pretty rare.

Your article piqued my interest, so now I'm curious to know how many of the four-cylinder 190E 2.3s were built. My hunch is that the 2.3 was the rarest of the four-cylinder W201s. The 2.3 didn't appear in the European market until the last couple of years of the model run, as it was designed for the American and Japanese markets and so was in those markets for longer. It did disappear from the American market for a couple of years when the 2.6 was the only choice for US customers.

Nancy Kuhn, Scottsdale, Arizona

A total of 186,610 2.3s were built between September 1988 and August 1993, production exceeding the 190E 1.8 (173,354) and carburettored 190 (83,540). The rarest four-cylinder W201, 16-valve cars excepted, was the US-only 190D 2.2, 10,560 of which were made.

Perfect day

In the past few issues of *Classic Mercedes* I have been reading about the cars sold at various classic auctions, mainly in the US, for huge prices. From what I can see in the photos they are in beautiful condition. But are they just a bit too beautiful?

Besides the fact that they are probably too pristine to be driven without fear of putting a scratch on the paintwork or a scuff on the interior trim, I feel they are just too much like new – or even better than new – to have real character. A patina of age is surely very important in a classic, allowing its period character to be truly appreciated, but these have none of that. I would rather have something looked like it had been driven a bit.

Alfred O'Shea, Cardiff, Wales

Clearly a few wealthy people agree because as reported in this and in the Spring issue, unrestored 'barn finds' can fetch more than restored examples.

On track

I am a new subscriber to *Classic Mercedes*, a member of *Mercedesklubben* here in Norway, a Mercedes enthusiast, and also the proud owner and driver of a 1995 E250 TD. I am trying to track down my parents' old Fintail that we had in Kenya, but took with us when we moved to the UK, in the hope of finding if it still exists, restoring it and then enjoying it as a shared hobby with my husband.

I thought that as the 'empty nest' years draw close, this might be a way of establishing a common interest for us. He does not share my passion for horses and aeroplanes, but he loves to travel and to drive, and he likes Mercedes cars.

Jennifer C Chisholm-Hoibraten, Skedsmokorset, Norway



Ownership of a 124 250TD is a matter of pride.

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Slowlane

Quiet, sunny roads in Germany allowed Dan Trent to enjoy the very same 180D Ponton that, despite only 39bhp at its disposal, took a class win in an international road race 59 years ago

IMAGES Dan Trent/Daimler AG

The journey

Car 180D, MO636 1,767cc, 39bhp, 75lb ft torque

Route Countryside around Stuttgart

Summary Despite the very limited horsepower and leisurely performance, a delightful drive that could never be forgotten

I have driven the winning car from the 1955 Mille Miglia. And as a Mercedes fan you will instantly picture one car, and one car only. It will be silver, it will be open-topped, and it will have the number 722 on its side. Nope, it was not that one.

OK, if you are a bit of a Mille Miglia geek you will be thinking, "OK, not 722… Then it must be that black Gullwing with 417 on the side, the one driven to class victory by John Fitch." No, sadly not that one, either, although I nearly got to drive it once, and my well stocked fantasy garage Gullwing wears that very same livery.

My Mille Miglia winner was somewhat less racy and glamorous than these two, but win it most certainly did, all the way back in the diesel category – a rather small group, containing just a couple of other 180Ds. 'Mine' was the winner, though, driven to class victory by Helmut Retter with Wolfgang Larcher on the maps.

And what a drive it must have been, their average speed over the 1,000 miles of the race a remarkable 59mph. OK, a little shy of Moss/Jenkinson's incredible 98mph but, given that the 180D topped out at 68mph – 100mph or so shy of Moss's 300SLR – and boasted just 39bhp, my guess is Retter just plonked a brick on the accelerator and left it at that. As an advert for Mercedes' engineering integrity that is a pretty conclusive one, too. After all, how many cars do you know that could stand being driven at an average speed – average, that is – just 15 per cent short of their published maximum for nearly 16 hours without going bang? All three 180Ds that entered finished the race, too.

My drive in the Mille Miglia Ponton was along the twisting backroads of the Swabian countryside outside the Classic Center's Fellbach base, and this car put a massive grin on my face. Its originality was beguiling, from the faded paintwork to the worn but beautifully patinated interior – complete with the distinctive Venetian blind in the rear window. This timewarp condition made the emotional link to that famous race even stronger.

So it was not 722. But I didn't care. Nor was I bothered that the flat, springy seats, a big, spindly steering wheel and column-mounted gear shift did not really shout "rally car". You see, this car was so charming to drive, no matter that changing gear did little but alter the pitch of the engine note. Or that reaching 60mph took the best part of 40 seconds. The



Only 39bhp and barely modified, but a class winner.



The 180D's interior, basic but functional, has a lovely six-decade old patina.

"THIS CAR WAS SO CHARMING TO DRIVE, NO MATTER THAT CHANGING GEAR DID LITTLE BUT ALTER THE PITCH OF THE ENGINE NOTE"

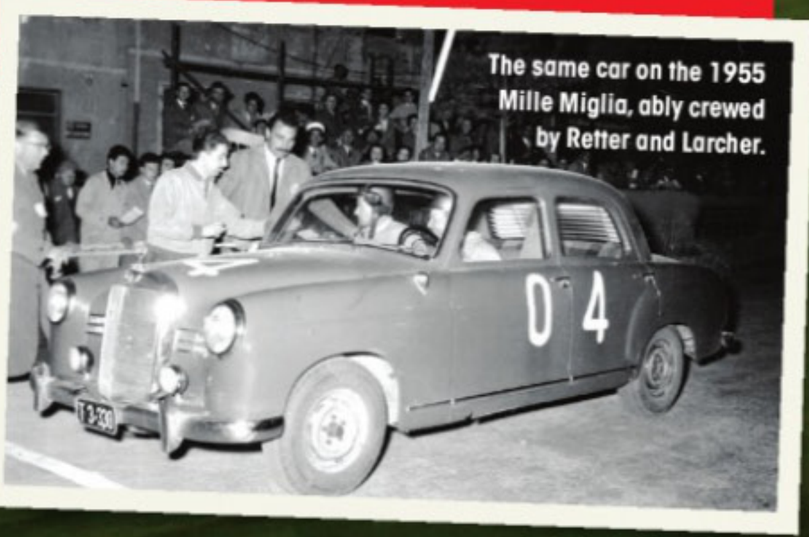
Ponton is just about the slowest car I have ever driven, but it was also just about the most fun.

I recall meeting effervescent Mercedes PR man Geoff Day on the 50th anniversary Mille Miglia event in 2005. All the attention was on Moss, 722 and the squad of new SLRs driven to the event by fortunate journalists. But Geoff was happy just to be involved, and at the wheel of a true race winner. "It's smiles per hour, Dan, not miles per hour," he said as he drove off for the start. Some time later, at the wheel of the very same machine, I realised just how right he was. CM

1955 Mille Miglia

The Mille Miglia (Thousand Miles) was a road race with special stages run in Italy from 1927 until 1957, when after two fatal accidents it was banned. An emasculated version followed, but was discontinued after two years, the event revived in 1977 as effectively a parade for pre-1957 cars, run in May each year.

In 1955 the Ponton was just two years into production, and a car Mercedes would have wanted to promote, hence the entry to the event. The race number 04 was allocated because the Retter/Larcher car left the start ramp at Brescia at four minutes past midnight – unlike in modern rallying where the fastest cars leave first, 60 years ago the slowest ones did in order to contain the event's overall timescale. Their car, as with virtually of all Mercedes' race and rally hardware since the dawn of motoring, has remained company property ever since.



The same car on the 1955 Mille Miglia, ably crewed by Retter and Larcher.

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INSIGHTS AND OPINIONS FROM INSIDE THE CLASSIC MERCEDES TRADE



New tune

Modifying a classic Mercedes can make you very unpopular among purists, but if it is done sympathetically and with great care it can enhance the car, and even its value, argues Thorsten Klenk



Not obvious from the outside that Mechatronik's W111 has a big power lift.

There are always two ways that your classic Mercedes can be taken care of – either keep everything original, or carry out modifications based on personal preferences, taking into account increases in usability and/or safety. And for many years before the introduction of the Charter of Turin in 2011, intended to preserve automobile heritage, there have been many debates on whether owners should or should not be allowed to modify classic cars.

This is obviously a very philosophical discussion, but there is surely no right or wrong. At Mechatronik we support our clients with a variety of solutions through either of our two companies, Classic and Engineering, from a fully original restoration to a complete technical upgrade of a Mercedes classic.

The Classic restoration aims, depending on the requirements of each client, to preserve the original substance of the car and, wherever possible, its patina, as well. This obviously requires a lot of experience, passion and a keen view for detail. We prefer to repair rather than to replace.

But a restoration might also contain modifications such as safety belts and headrests which are admittedly not original – although in some cases were available as costly extras when the car was new – but certainly increase the safety and comfort of the occupants. If a client wants to have the car restored according to his preferences rather than the 'data card', it might not have the quite same classic value thereafter, but it will provide more satisfaction for its owner. Is that wrong?

A similar issue arises if a required spare part is no longer available. Either you find a refurbished part, or you have one specially remanufactured, which inevitably ends up superior in design to the original. Is the latter course wrong?

Mechatronik's Engineering restorations go a number of steps further than offering owners added driving pleasure in everyday use. All technical upgrades are carried out in line with our long standing belief that we should adapt the technology to the car, not the other way round. All modifications are, should the owner wish this at any stage, totally reversible, since bodywork is neither altered nor significantly drilled. From the outside of any Mechatronik car, I promise you will not be able to tell that it has been modified.

"NEITHER UNDERTAKING TECHNICAL MODIFICATIONS NOR RESTORING CAN BE CHEAP IF IT IS DONE PROPERLY"

This type of upgrade work keeps cars on the roads that, perhaps, would otherwise have long since disappeared. Once again, is that the wrong thing for a classic enthusiast to do? There are certainly other approaches on the market that take less care of the original substance of the car, thus destroying it in the end. In our view that is wrong, but who shall be the judge?

Then comes the issue of value and cost. Neither undertaking technical modifications nor restoring to original condition can be cheap if it is done properly, but the subsequent value of the car can be decided only by the market. Presently, prices of fully original cars are at least stable and in some cases increasing fast – the W111 coupe and convertible, either with the six-cylinder or V8 engine have risen significantly in past months. But we have also seen the demand for upgraded classic cars increasing.

There is no clear answer to the question of whether classics should or should not be modified. In the end it is the responsibility of owners to decide. In our view, the only important thing is to treat a classic car with the respect it, and the engineers who developed and built it, deserve. CM

⇨ *Thorsten Klenk is marketing director at classic Mercedes specialist Mechatronik GmbH near Stuttgart, Germany Tel 00 49 (0)7144 9982 Web www.mechatronik.de*

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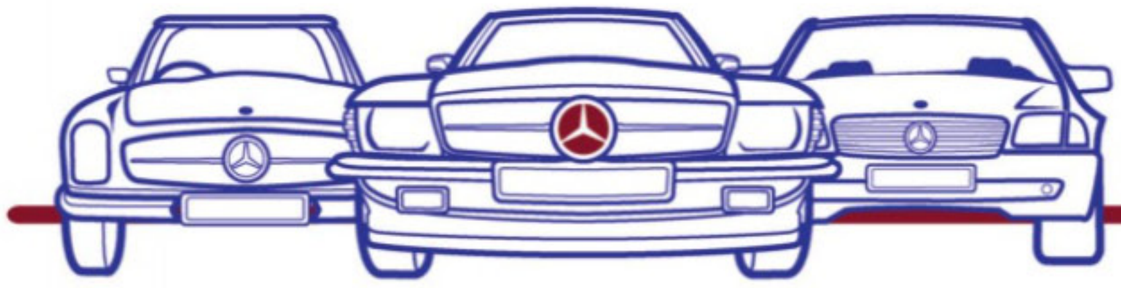
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COVER STORY

Using Ponton underpinnings, the exceptionally pretty W121 was designed as a mass-produced, affordable version of the space-framed 300SL, and proved a key sports car of the 1950s, says David Sutherland

Little wonder

IMAGES John Colley



"25,881 190SLs had been built in a production life three months short of eight years, with the majority of cars going to the US"

Specifications



Mercedes-Benz 190SL
(W121)

Engine	M121 1,897cc 4-cyl in-line
Power	104bhp@5,700rpm
Torque	105lb ft@3,200rpm
0-62mph	14.5sec
Max speed	113mph
Transmission	4-speed manual
Fuel consumption	32.8mpg
Weight	1,140kg
Years built	1955-1963
Number produced	25,881

All figures from Mercedes-Benz

Mercedes-Benz hobbled into the 1950s a very much reduced industrial entity, its factories 80 per cent destroyed in World War Two, and its 1930s swagger vanquished. Indeed the 1948 annual report concluded that, practically speaking, the company ceased to exist.

Yet within five years Mercedes had almost totally reinvented itself. Its pre-war grand prix racing dominance had been restored (although this came to a premature end following the 1955 Le Mans tragedy, in which many people died), and the quite sensational 300SL Coupe, or 'Gullwing', launched in 1954 amply demonstrated that even with its pared down financial muscle compared to pre-war resources, the company was still a technology leader.

The 1953 Ponton, with its monocoque construction and passenger safety cell, had re-established the carmaker as a credible force in the mainstream market. This four-door, 'three-box' saloon highlighted the four-cylinder 170- and six-cylinder 220-series models, and even the 300 Adenauer, with their running boards and separate wings as the pre-war designs they essentially were. Daimler-Benz was riding the wave of West Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder* ('economic miracle'), its optimism and confidence not only reflected in its new models but in the way in which it was building itself into an international company, opening a factory in ⇨



"The 1958 annual report concluded that, practically speaking, the company ceased to exist. Yet within five years Mercedes had almost totally reinvented itself"





Red metal and tan leather make for a truly stunning combination on this 190SL.

Owner Wolfgang Rauch

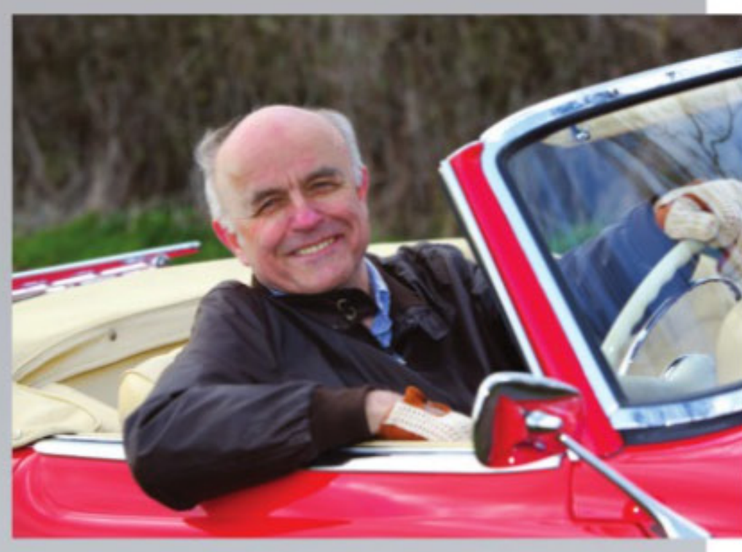
A minor front end shunt was the spur for a full, ground-up restoration

The collection of Mercedes classics built up by Wolfgang Rauch, who runs a commercial packaging systems company, was already considerable, comprising a 1950s' 300S Coupe, a W198 300SL Roadster, three 280SL Pagodas, a W111 300SE Cabriolet, and an R107 300SL. But he hankered after one obvious omission, a W121 190SL.

In 2000, "after looking all over the place", he found this 1961 car in the Lake District and liberated it to Surrey, where he lives "I liked the colour – but when I got it home I realised it needed a lot of love," he recalls.

Nothing was done for a year or so, until the unexpected happened. "I drove into the car in front," Rauch admits. "It wasn't serious – even without a seat belt I wasn't hurt – but after that I decided to give it a total restoration." That was carried out by classic car restorer Rees Bros in Aldershot in Hampshire, over an extended period, with many of the parts refurbished in Germany. "Not a nut or a bolt went without attention, and it took so long that by the time it was finished I didn't need to mention the accident for my insurance because it had been over five years earlier," he adds. Meanwhile, he bought another 190SL, a white one.

So far, Wolfgang had not been a Mercedes-Benz Club member, or bothered with concours competitions, but that changed when he joined the club to obtain some assistance with certification on two of his other cars. "I decided to attend the 190SL Day at Brooklands, as it was local to me, to have a look at how other 190SLs compared to mine, and won Best of Show," he says. That led to an attendance at the club's 2013

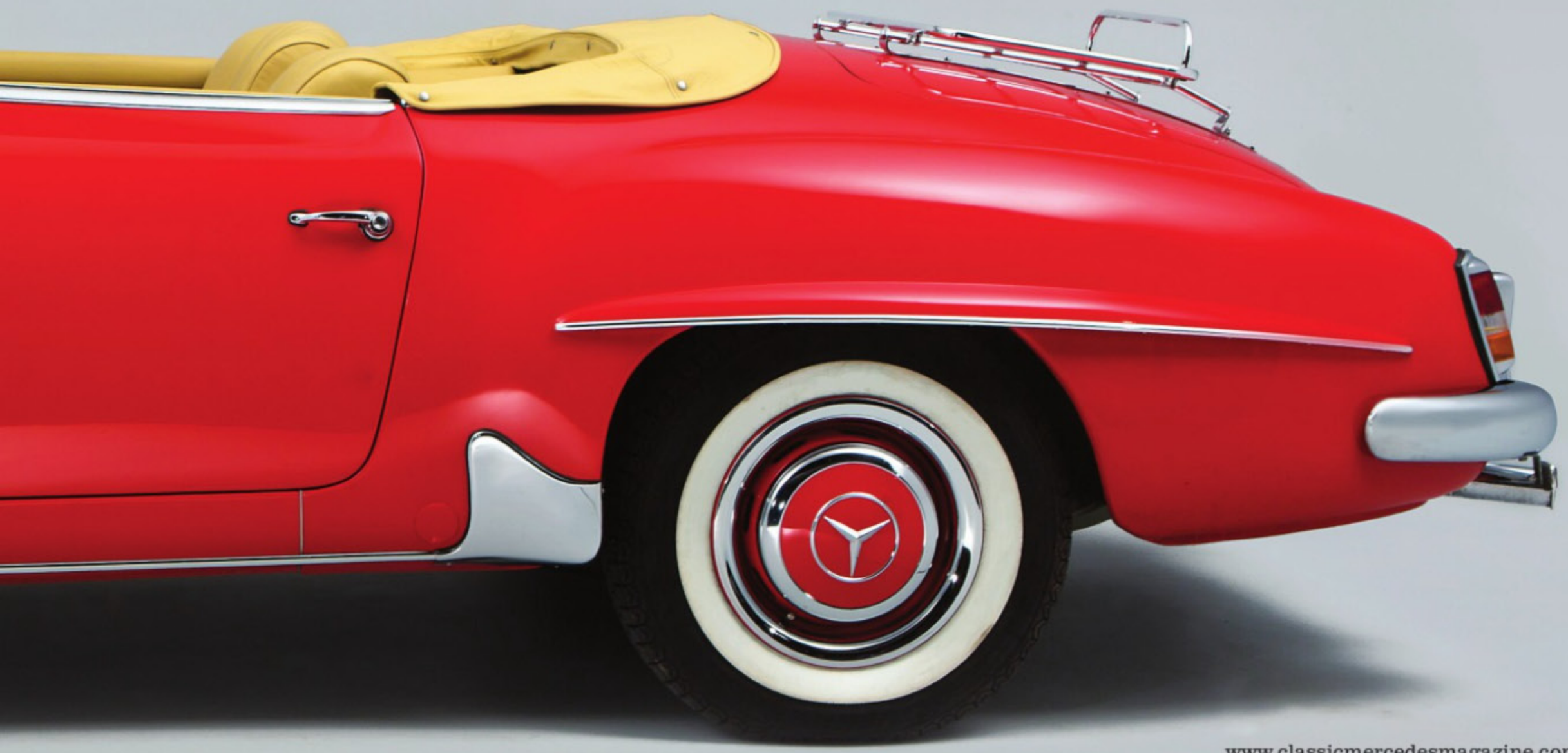


National Concours Day at Mercedes' headquarters in Milton Keynes in June, where he won the Older Sports Cars category, after which the 190SL's presence was requested on the club's stand at the Classic Motor Show at the NEC in Birmingham last November.

How does Wolfgang rate this 190SL compared to his other classics? "It's one of the easiest to drive – the 300SL is much more temperamental, and you have to keep the revs up," he says.



The optional side facing rear seat can be turned into a normal parcel shelf.



⇨ Argentina, with Brazil and India to follow shortly. Even West Germany's victory in football's World Cup of 1954, hosted by Switzerland and noted in history as the 'Miracle of Bern', helped sum up the country's transformation.

While the Gullwing was Mercedes' engineering showcase, and would be built in small numbers (1,400 by the end of its four-year run in 1957), it became increasingly clear, even before the 300SL's launch, that there would be strong demand for a less exotic, more affordable stablemate. At least, it was obvious to Mercedes' visionary US importer, the Austrian born Max Hoffman, who earlier had persuaded Stuttgart to turn the 1952 300SL race car, with its top-hinged doors, into the road-going 300SL Coupe, and who history credits as the man who made the resultant car, the 190SL, happen as well.

Appropriately, the W121 190SL was unveiled in New York, at the International Motor Sports Show in February 1954 – actually, at the same time as the 300SL Coupe made its debut, although, with engineering and design work still to do, it did not go into production until May of the following year. By the time it was finally launched it had lost the bonnet air intake of the 1954 show car, but gained 'winglets' above the rear wheelarches, to match those at the front, and its launch price was DM16,500 (around £1,400) compared to the 300SL's DM29,000 (£2,500).

The 190SL, styled by Mercedes designers Walter Häcker and Karl Wilfert, looked like a scaled down 300SL (and was also very similar to the 300SL Roadster that would replace the Gullwing in 1957). But while the 300SL used a weight saving, light-alloy space frame, in view of the 190SL's higher production aspirations, it was far more mundane in construction. Indeed, it was based on the platform of the four-cylinder Ponton model of the time, the W120 180. It used that car's front ⇨



Daimler AG

The original motor show 190SL lacked the rear 'winglets'.







"It became increasingly clear, even before the 300SL's launch, that there would be strong demand for a less exotic, more affordable stablemate"

ABOVE
Limited power but the twin carbs pick up well.

ABOVE RIGHT
The fascia has a full complement of dials.

THIS PICTURE
190SL is as sleek at the tail as at the front end.





Driving the 190SL

The 1950s roadster will never excite with its pace, but charm is a quality it has in abundance

During the 1950s many sports cars were cramped, and the 190SL is no exception. The seat is pushed as far back as it will go, but my legs are angled so that my feet can work the pedals, and I am worryingly close to the steering wheel. But no matter, the 190SL's cabin is seductive, with its lovely red metal dash and contrasting tan trim on its top. It is also liberally stocked with instruments, the large speedometer and rev counter augmented by a schoolboy pleasing complement of minor dials, for fuel, oil pressure and water temperature, while a clock in the same style is set in the glove box lid.

The cream coloured, large-diameter steering wheel – the exact opposite of the small, thick, leather trimmed item of almost every Mercedes nowadays – looks wonderful, and rather than the direction indicators being on a stalk, they are operated by pulling down on the left or right spoke of the wheel's inner chrome ring. It's a nice detail – but one which recently confused an MOT tester, who didn't know they were there and, until the owner pointed out his mistake, was about to fail the car on non-functioning indicators. This 1960 car has the optional side facing rear seat, which can be removed to leave the normal flat area behind the front seats.

"Like most cars of its generation, the 190SL demands a concentrated input from its driver – you cannot be lazy with it"

It looks like a scaled down 300SL, but on the road the 190SL is a totally different proposition. It is not the road-going race car that the space-framed, fuel-injected 300SL was, but a pleasant, open-topped two seater with sprightly rather than intense performance. Whereas the 300SL strikes up a stirring cacophony of mechanical sounds and vibrations, the 190SL's 1.9-litre four-cylinder is mundane by comparison, and less communicative. No surprise that by today's standards its pace is quite pedestrian, but with its twin carburettors it has a lively pick up and also quite a rorty sound.

Like most cars of its generation, the 190SL demands a concentrated input from its driver – you cannot be lazy with it, as you can with just about any modern Mercedes or, indeed, any other car. Constant corrections to the vague steering (although at 3.5 turns lock to lock it is not low-geared) are necessary to maintain course, and for neat shifting of gears you must carefully, but quickly, guide the spindly and vague feeling lever into its correct gate. Double declutching – selecting neutral and releasing the clutch, briefly revving the engine, dipping the clutch again and quickly slotting the lower gear in before the revs die to equalise cog speeds – pay dividends when downshifting, making the process much smoother. The 190SL is, indeed, from a far off generation of cars – which, of course, is part of its considerable charm.


As the cabin is a tight fit, the 190SL is at its best when the hood is folded.

⇨ subframe and axle – an innovative design that went some way toward isolating vibration from the rest of the car – although was not powered by the same 1.8-litre engine, but instead a new 1.9-litre four-cylinder unit. This was fuelled by twin Solex carburettors and good for 104bhp, just over double the saloon's output. That, however, was approximately half the horsepower of the 300SL's fuel-injected, three-litre engine, and the 105lb ft was a similar fraction.

There were two regular versions of the 190SL, a Roadster with a canvas hood, and a Coupe with a removable hardtop, the hood an option on the latter model. No doubt with a competitor to Porsche's 356 Speedster club racer in mind, in the first year of production Mercedes also offered a racing conversion kit, comprising light alloy doors and twin Plexiglas flyscreens, the idea being that besides fitting these in place of the original doors and screen, owners would also remove the bumpers and other items to save weight. But according to leading 190SL specialist Redcastle Classics in Wales, only a handful of these kits were delivered, probably because the modifications would have pitched the 190SL into the GT class, in which it would have stood no chance due to its limited output.

Replaced by the W113 SL in 1963, 25,881 190SLs had been built in a production life three months short of eight years, with the majority going to the US. The car never underwent a facelift, all updates being minor. In 1956 new chrome strips appeared on the upper section of the doors, and the Ponton 220's larger rear lamps were fitted, while a year later the number plate panel was enlarged and its light set in the bumper. In 1959 the hardtop gained a bigger screen and, finally, in 1960 the door handles and boot lock were modified. CM

Marque of shame

1957 saw Mercedes fleetingly associated with the seamier side of life

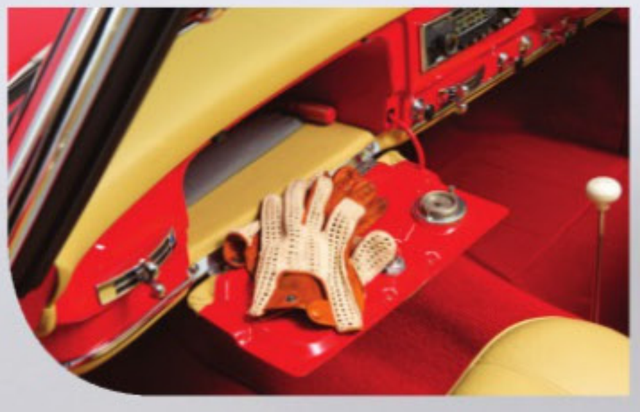
The Mercedes-Benz image took a wobble when the 190SL was found to be at the heart of one of West Germany's first major scandals in the post-war period. It was the favoured transport of a high society prostitute named Rosemarie Nitribitt (pictured), who after an impoverished and traumatic childhood went on to ply her trade in Frankfurt so successfully that she became sufficiently wealthy to maintain an affluent lifestyle. The black 190SL she bought in 1956, made even more distinctive by red leather upholstery and whitewall tyres, was said to have been used in the course of her soliciting clients.

But she was found murdered in November 1957 in her luxury apartment in Frankfurt, after which police investigations revealed a number of prominent figures, including the then head of the Krupp industrial corporation, to have been among Nitribitt's alleged associates. The case, arguably the German equivalent of the 1963 Profumo affair in the UK, shocked a then quite prudish German public, particularly as no successful prosecution was brought, and also because there were allegations of a cover-up by some of the well known people involved. For a while afterwards the 190SL was commonly referred to as the 'Nitribitt-Mercedes', and to this day the whereabouts of Nitribitt's car, impounded by police at the time, is unknown.











CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
The delightful picnic set is one the owner found on eBay; always steel rims for the 190SL in this pre-alloy wheel era; being a 1961 car, this has the bigger rear lamp clusters; period stringback driving gloves go perfectly with this Mercedes roadster.



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Secret star

The 300SL Gullwing was an extraordinary sports car of its day, and a few well chosen but hidden changes make this fully restored example even better to drive, Richard Truesdell reports

IMAGES
Richard Truesdell

"The majority of 300SL Gullwings produced initially were shipped to the United States, with many ending up with Hollywood celebrities, such as Clark Gable"





ABOVE
The nose of the 300SL is heavily chromed and has a beautiful 1950s look.

ABOVE RIGHT
Flipping down the steering wheel is essential to make entry to the driver's seat.

The Mercedes-Benz 300SL Coupe, or Gullwing is undeniably an automotive icon, one that many enthusiasts reckon is the first post-war supercar. It was the ultimate 'halo' car for the marque, developed at a time when much of what was then West Germany lay in rubble. It was born of the vision of an Austrian turned American, Max Hoffman, who convinced Mercedes-Benz to build a road-going version of its all-conquering 300SL race car. And because of the importance of the American market, the production version of the 300SL Gullwing made its debut at the 1954 New York Auto Show rather than, say, the Geneva show.

"Because of the importance of the American market, the 300SL Gullwing made its debut at the 1954 New York Auto Show"

The production version of the Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing, designated the W198 series, was even more powerful than the W194 race car on which it was based. While the W194's three-litre straight-six, taken from the big 300 Adenauer saloon, was fuelled by three carburettors, the W198, using the same basic engine, featured the first production application of direct fuel-injection, using technology that had been pioneered by Bosch in the Daimler-Benz DB601 aircraft engine during World War Two.

One cannot overestimate the importance of Hoffman in the creation of the 300SL road car. Here was a man who genuinely had his hand on the pulse of the American market, especially for luxury cars. His insight into his well-heeled customers, many of them entertainment celebrities, gave him leverage with the factory in Stuttgart. At the time there was still a degree of resentment on the part of the American public, due to Germany's involvement in the war less than a decade before, yet the reputation of Mercedes-Benz remained beyond reproach.

The engine, while robust, was heavy, forcing Mercedes-Benz engineers, including the highly respected Rudolf Uhlenhaut, to put the proposed race car on a diet, specifying a lightweight space-frame constructed from triangular tubes to provide the necessary strength. To improve aerodynamics, the engine was canted over at an angle of 50 degrees, helping to provide a Cd figure of 0.376, 20 per cent better than the best of its more powerful contemporaries. Weighing just 870kg unladen, the lightweight 173bhp 300SL was capable of sprinting from standstill to 62mph in seven seconds and, with enough road and with the correct gearing, a top speed of 150mph.

Because the rules governing sports car racing obliged eligible vehicles to have two properly opening doors, this presented a dilemma to Uhlenhaut and his engineering team. Cutting the doors into the space frame would reduce its structural integrity, so they came up with the novel, top-opening gullwing doors, a trademark carried through to the road car introduced a couple of years later.

Success in competition, especially after wins in Mexico in the 1952 Carrera Panamericana road race and at Le Mans that same year, was all the ammunition Hoffman needed to approach the factory to persude it to build a production version. He promised to take 1,000 cars, and as a result of his confidence, the majority of the 300SL Gullwings produced initially were shipped to the United States, with many ending up with the Hollywood rich and famous, such as Clark Gable, behind the wheel.

As far as current owners Pat Matthews and his wife Patti Paulson know, their black 1956 300SL Gullwing, part of a collection of classic Mercedes, has no known celebrity owners, but that doesn't mean that it lacks an interesting past. They bought it in February 1999 and it subsequently underwent a complete mechanical restoration that took two years. The couple then drove it from their home in the San Francisco Bay Area to Victoria, British Columbia, in September 2001 for the Gullwing annual convention, a round trip of 2,000 miles. It was shipped to Detroit in 2003 for a trip around the Great Lakes to Niagara Falls for that year's Gull Wing Convention. In 2005 it was back to the East Coast when the car was shipped to Rhode Island for that year's Gull Wing Convention.

In 2009 the car was shipped to Adelaide, Australia, for the Classic Adelaide Rally. After the rally the adventurous couple took advantage of the opportunity to drive the ⇨









ABOVE
Knock-off wheels reflect the sports car character.

ABOVE LEFT
There is an instrument for just about every function, and a clock as well.

LEFT AND BELOW
The 300SL had top-hinged doors to preserve the space-frame's strength.

Specifications



Mercedes-Benz 300SL Coupe (W198)

Engine	M198 2,996cc 6-cyl
Power	212bhp@5,800rpm
Torque	202lb ft@4,600rpm
Transmission	5-speed manual (modified)
Weight	1,295kg
0-62mph	10.0sec
Top speed	163mph
Fuel consumption	26 mpg
Years produced	1954-1957
Number built	1,400

All figures from Mercedes-Benz





ABOVE
Not much luggage space, but this SL's owners take it on many long journeys.

TOP
A five-speed gearbox and a few electrical upgrades improve the performance.

⇨ Great Ocean Road to Melbourne, after which a ferry ride to Tasmania allowed Patti and Pat to circumnavigate Tasmania for a week.

On returning to the US, however, Matthews installed a specially modified BMW/Getrag five-speed transmission. He says the five-speed upgrade makes a world of difference, especially on long drives, dropping engine rpm at 75mph from 3,500 to 2,900rpm while simultaneously improving fuel consumption.

After that the car attended several other Gull Wing Conventions until the autumn of 2011 when Matthews, who does much of his own work on the car, carried out a number of upgrades in the interest of improved drivability. The engine was removed and rebuilt, while a 55-amp alternator, a 123-series electronic distributor, an electric cooling fan, and an electronic rather than mechanical fuel pump were installed – all easily reversible changes. Other upgrades included a new wiring harness, a rebuilt steering box, added insulation, and not least a respray.

After this comprehensive refurbishment, in 2012 the couple drove through Yosemite National Park, stayed at June Lake and journeyed on to attend the 2012 Gull Wing Convention in Palm Springs, California. From there the car made another ocean voyage, this time to Auckland, New Zealand, for a 2,200-mile 300SL Rally, after which the car shipped back to Steve Marx in Costa Mesa, California for some mechanical work. And this is where the story gets really dramatic.

On the return trip to California, the shipping container that the 300SL was secured in was dropped. Matthews got a call from the shipping agent who asked, "Did you put the car in the container damaged?" Thankfully, Matthews had hundreds of photographs documenting the condition of the car before it was loaded into the container. After examination of the car it was discovered that the rear axles were bent forward two inches. Matthews called noted restorer Jerry Hjeltness of Hjeltness Restoration in Escondido, California, who examined the Mercedes, and found that while the exterior damage initially appeared slight, there was structural damage. The bootlid was bent and the doors misaligned.

The decision was made, in consultation with Hagerty, the insurer, for the car to undergo a complete restoration. Hagerty, through its underwriter, Lloyd's of London, who carried the marine insurance, would pay for all damage related to the container drop, while Matthews would cover additional work. This included eliminating some rust, the cost far less while the car was undergoing the other repairs.

When asked if the car is over-restored, Matthews replies, "It's better than when it left the factory, but I don't consider it over restored in today's Gullwing world."

After a year at Hjeltness Restoration, on March 31 2014, *Classic Mercedes* was on hand as Matthews took delivery. There were smiles all around as he climbed into the cockpit for a 90-minute drive over to Steve Marx's shop in Costa Mesa, and during which he was the recipient of dozens of thumbs up from other drivers. They realised they were seeing something special, a Gullwing being driven as was intended when it was designed more than 60 years ago. CM

⇨ ***Pat Matthews and Patti Paulson have founded a 300SL Museum. It is located at 902 Enterprise Way, Suite D, Napa, California. Visit www.300slmuseum.org***

"The five-speed upgrade makes a world of difference, especially on long runs, dropping engine rpm and improving consumption"





RIGHT
At Hjeltness Retoration for a rebuild following some damage during a shipping.

FAR RIGHT
This was 2012, at the Gull Wing Convention held at Palm Springs, California.

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1970 Mercedes 280SL Auto.

We are pleased to offer this beautiful 1970 280SL Auto for your interest. Finished in DB172 Antrazit Grau, a Mulberry Red leather interior with matching carpets and a contrasting Black Sonnenland Mohair soft top; makes this a very striking and unusual combination.

The car has benefitted from a complete body restoration circa 2004/05 and has since been maintained by ourselves for the previous two owners. A fully reconditioned automatic gearbox was fitted just last year. Having cover small miles over the last number of years with summer use only, this is the perfect opportunity to obtain one of these much sought after cars. More photos and info on request **£74,995**



1965 Mercedes 230SL

We are delighted to offer this beautiful example of the much sought after Mercedes W113 Pagoda. This particular car is a June 1965 registered Mercedes-Benz 230SL with manual transmission. Subject to a recent restoration, over 700 hours have been spent to bring this 230SL back to life.

This is one of the last cars which to benefit from a full new Mercedes-Benz panel replacement restoration, as the rear fenders are now no longer available, and the fronts now also on short supply. This car is a proper restored example. Finished in the original DB332 Dark Blue with Parchment MB-Tex & Cream Haargan Boucle carpet makes for a striking contrast which highlights the curvatures and the chrome of this very desirable classic **£69,995**



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Beauty contest

Some say it is prettiest of the classic SLs, and during his drive David Sutherland certainly found that this 230SL attracted a lot of attention

IMAGES Terry Oborne

tv

"Compared to other 1960s cars the W113 SL feels extraordinarily modern, and on a warm day with the hardtop removed is a dream"

A classic SL, roof left in the garage, and an empty road – doesn't get much better!

Wherever you go there is always a touch of glamour attached to a Pagoda SL.



"For five decades it has been the transport of the rich and famous, from Beatle John Lennon to more recently supermodel Kate Moss and David Coulthard"

The plan had been to check out a W113 230SL from the point of view of a prospective buyer, and 30 minutes into my roadtest came proof that it is not possible to drive this exceptionally pretty car without attracting attention.

No sooner had we found a spot for photography, than a striking looking young woman appeared. Beckoning towards the statuesque brunette propped up against a Nissan Figaro, and surrounded by a makeup posse, she said, "Oh, I love your car, I'm shooting one of my models, can I have it in my pictures?"

The next 20 minutes, during which much pouting and cries of "Oh, darling!" accompanied the chattering camera shutter, could not help but colour the rest of the roadtest for this man who will not see 50 again. I subsequently found it a little difficult to concentrate on the brief – how does it drive? Is it a practical classic? – and instead wondered who was looking at me, or rather at the Pagoda.

And those who gaze at a Mercedes-Benz Pagoda (the name is taken from the slightly concave factory hardtop) could perhaps see a star behind the wheel, as well as on the large grille. For over five decades it has been the preferred transport of the rich and famous, from Beatle John Lennon in the 1960s to more recently supermodel Kate Moss and former F1 driver turned television pundit David Coulthard, whose gorgeous, silver and blue 280SL was memorably used in the filming of an early morning track recce during the 2009 Monaco Grand Prix.

Specifications



Mercedes-Benz 230SL
(W113)

Engine
M127 2,306cc, 6-cyl in-line

Power
148bhp@5,500rpm

Torque
145lb ft@4,200rpm

Transmission
4-speed automatic

Weight
1,295kg

0-62mph
10.7sec

Top speed
122mph

Fuel consumption
27.7mpg

Years produced
1963-1966

Number built
19,381

All figures from Mercedes-Benz

It is this long-standing adulation that has underpinned prices of the W113, built for eight years until 1971, and of all the SL generations only values of the preceding 1950s 190SL and 300SL surpass it. These days the very best condition Pagoda will cost upwards of £50,000. This January 1965 230SL, from all makes classic car dealer Chelsea Cars in Wandsworth, London, had been sold, hence managing director Rob Turner preferred not to reveal its price, but he quotes around £40,000 as an average price for a rust-free car with no mechanical issues.

The 230SL was the first of the three W113 variants, powered by a 148bhp, 2.3-litre, straight-six engine. It was replaced in 1966 by the 2.5-litre 250SL, itself giving way to the 2.8-litre 280SL in 1968. The last in the line had 20bhp more than the 230SL, but the cars look almost identical, and probably only a Pagoda aficionado would be able to tell them apart.

"The main difference between the 230SL and the others is the braking," says Turner (the 230SL's rear drum brakes were replaced by discs on the 250SL and 280SL), adding that condition also plays a big part in how they drive. "A good 230SL is as good as an average 280SL." With lighter paint shades like white and silver matched with red or tan leather seats the most sought after combination, this particular car in its dark colours feels a bit sombre, but it was resprayed and retrimmed to the customer's desired specification. It features the optional, side-facing rear seat that although fitted with a belt is a nominal effort.



TOP TO BOTTOM
Air intake on the bonnet, but the best way to get fresh air is to lose the roof; automatic gear selector is unusual, Park at the rear, not the front of the gate; the tank is fuelled through a filler on the tail, to the right of the number plate.

As with all Chelsea Cars' sales, this Pagoda came with a one-year breakdown warranty covering the major mechanical components. Customers are also given a letter pointing out that they should not expect to treat a classic car in the same way they would a modern one. "The vehicle you have selected is from a different era and even when new required rather more care, consideration and routine maintenance than a modern vehicle," it reads, going on to say that the car "will not necessarily be at its best on a long journey" and advising a "more relaxed approach" to driving.

Health warning noted, I belted myself in (thankfully this car has inertia belts) and prepared for the quite tricky manoeuvre of moving off and merging into the traffic that flies round the Wandsworth one-way system. It highlights one big difference between this and most other automatic cars made since, which could throw anyone new to a Pagoda: the gear selector on the four-speed gearbox. Instead of the lever being nudged back from Park into Drive, it travels in the opposite direction, from Park at the extreme rear through Reverse and then into Drive or 4, 3 and 2 beyond that. It feels awkward, especially as the movement from Park into Drive lacks precision, but the arrangement is none the less preferable to the manual shift on Pagodas – and the automatic gearbox also brought with it much needed power-assisted steering.

On this car, it takes quite a push on the throttle to shift the car smartly away from rest, but once the W113 is ⇨

⇨ moving the fuel-injected, overhead camshaft engine feels responsive, quite sporty, even, thanks to the buzzy exhaust that is a W113 hallmark. Anyone seeking a 280SL over a 230SL on the basis of the extra speed would be disappointed. If, incidentally, a Pagoda engine lacks a crisp feel, it may be because the complicated throttle linkage with its numerous points of adjustment is out of true, and/or a float in the fuel system is sticking which causes the engine to run either too weak or too rich.

"A retro look Becker Mexico radio incorporating sat nav has also been fitted, though some might be happier with the simple, original radio"


Becker looks like a period radio, but contains modern day electronics within.

Besides its wonderful exterior styling, the Pagoda's cabin with its painted metal fascia, chrome-edged instruments and large, thin rimmed steering wheel with semi-circular horn push is also a sheer delight. However, the messages that the lovely, knee-brushing steering wheel imparts are something else that the driver weaned on modern cars would have to get used to. Compared to that of, say a current-shape SLK, this SL's steering is extremely vague. The system, recirculating ball compared to the rack and pinion Mercedes' cars have had for well over a decade, has little feel, and could give some the false impression that the Pagoda suffers from slothful handling – but for a half-century old design the car actually grips the road and brakes very well. I have no complaints about ride comfort, either, which thanks in part to the long travel of the rear coil springs affords a suppleness in marked contrast to the unyieldingly firm Sport set up Mercedes-Benz likes to provide nowadays.

Chelsea Cars' 'dos and don'ts' list also warns that the Pagoda is not the ideal motorway companion, the lack of modern seat comfort a factor. At the worst end of the scale, a W113's unrestored seating will be soft and partially collapsed, but even the best ones – and the seats on this car come close to that – are soft and none too supportive.

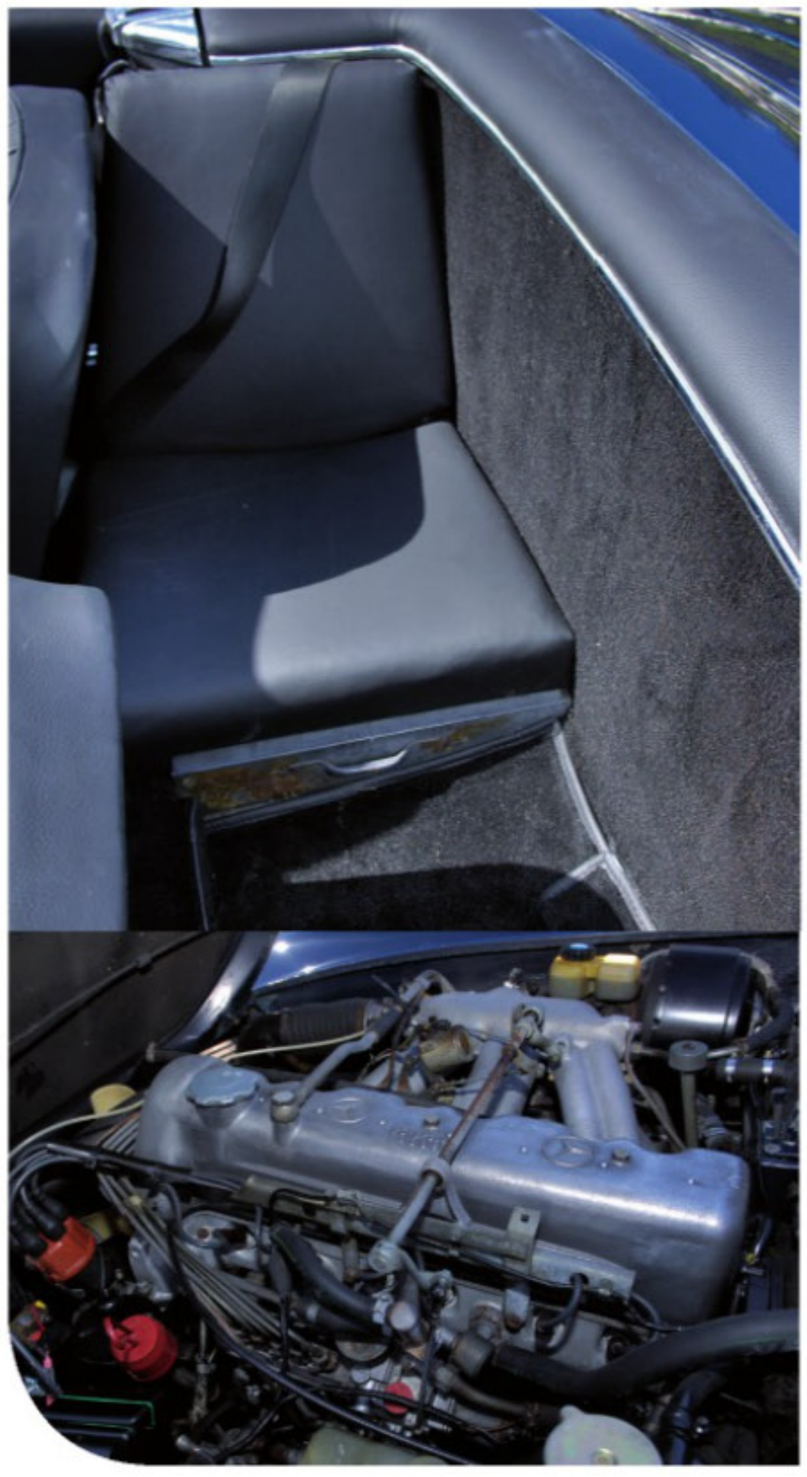
There are a couple of modern touches on this car. An alarm system has been installed, which with its fiddly priming and deactivating is irksome, but a Pagoda without anti-theft protection would be a very vulnerable car, indeed. A retro look Becker Mexico radio incorporating sat nav has also been fitted, though some might be happier with the simple, original radio, given the Pagoda's pretty high noise levels and the added strain a fancy hi-fi can place on an elderly electrical system.

Of the population of decent W113s remaining, this is a middling example, with nothing obviously wrong, but at the same time it is not a concours winner – for example, its paintwork is not pristine. But the very best classics are often prisoners of their own perfection, owners afraid of using them lest the increased mileage or minor wear and tear diminish their value. I see this lovely 230SL Pagoda as more of a driver's car, one to be used without fear of collecting the odd scuff or scratch.

I never need any persuasion to drive a W113, but could I recommend one to someone who likes the idea of one but is unaware of the realities of such a car? Provided the prospective purchaser goes for a proper test drive and truthfully analyses whether they could live with its character and also its lack of modern fittings such as parking sensors, airbags and central locking, then yes. Compared to most other 1960s cars the W113 SL feels extraordinarily modern, and on a warm day, with the hardtop removed and a destination not requiring a prompt arrival, the car is a dream. As our morning with the 230SL proved, others will think so, too – but that may be good or a bad, depending on how much you like being the centre of attention. CM

BELOW
The W113 was the last SL that could be ordered with a side facing rear seat.

BOTTOM
230SL's 2.3 is the least powerful W113 engine but feels much like the others.





Patrick Carroll

Mercedes from the Isle of Man

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Classic White with contrasting Black hide interior, electric sunroof. Full service history with detailed file to confirm the last owner for 20 years £3,000

1987 PORSCHE 928 S4 AUTO, BLUE, BLUE LEATHER, 42,000 MILES £17,500
DUE IN: 300SL 24 VALVE, 1 OWNER FROM NEW, 39,000 MILES ONLY £POA

Tangerine dream

The striking colour of this 450SL may be a matter of taste, but Lizzie Pope nonetheless fell under its spell, and was soon checking out R107 prices and likely running costs

IMAGES
Eric Richardson

SL SPECIAL
R107
1971-1989

450SL

"Judging by the admiring glances enjoyed by this 450SL in the time we spent with it, this is a very desirable car"



There are surely few who are not seduced by the idea of a modern classic Mercedes-Benz convertible, an SL, preferably with a V8 engine. That is the inevitable conclusion as the sun beats down, sparkling off the glistening chromework, the lazy eight burbling up front as a gentle breeze washes through the cabin, light turns being all that are required to steer this striking roadster along our route.

For many people that sounds like a dream, but there is one word that strikes fear into the heart of many: classic. Beautiful, old cars are flights of fancy, right? Hideously expensive to buy and run? Which is why this, the Mercedes-Benz R107 SL, built from 1971 until 1989, could help make your dreams real.

"Usable examples can start at £5,000," says Carl Wilford, proprietor of independent Mercedes dealer Autobarn, and a specialist in R107s. "At that price it should start every day, and be as reliable as a £5,000 Fiesta, but more fun to drive," he explains. "Mediocre examples are generally below £15,000," Wilford continues. "The minefield is the £16,000 to £19,000 price bracket, where many have dubious histories, don't drive with the all important crispness, and have been smartened up, hiding corrosion, and so are, in fact, sub-£15,000 cars."

At the other end of the scale, what's the top price? Wilford says values are rising, and that excellent R107s can sell for over £40,000. "The best cars are always stunningly crisp and flawless 300SLs with under 20,000 miles and a verifiable history in the most popular colours, which are dark metallics and increasingly red or white."

But how about this car, a 450SL, these built from 1971 until 1980? "The 450s and pre-1986 [facelift] cars in general are worth half the value of post-1986 cars," he advises. "Although they are perhaps not the first choice, they offer solid value. I wouldn't say they are unpopular, just a degree less sought after. The very best 450SL will be around £15,000."

But judging by the admiring glances enjoyed by this 450SL in the time we spent with it, this is a very desirable car. Granted, its unusual but very becoming colour was a factor, but it was more than that, with guests to the Brooklands Hotel in Surrey where we took the photographs happy to be sucked into the SL dream. So what that it isn't the model beloved of connoisseurs.

RIGHT
4.5-litre V8 ran from the beginning of R107 production until 1980.

FAR RIGHT
The 450SL is less sought after than the 500SL that replaced it, but is cheaper.

BELOW RIGHT
Exposed screw head in the bodywork an odd oversight but build quality was high.



Specifications



Mercedes-Benz 450SL
(R107)

Engine	M117 4,520cc V8
Power	214bhp@5,000rpm
Torque	265lb ft@3,250rpm
Transmission	3-speed automatic
Weight	1,580kg
0-62mph	9.3sec
Top speed	130mph
Fuel consumption	19.5mpg
Years produced	1971-1980
Number built	66,298

All figures from Mercedes-Benz









That means you can get more R107 metal for your money. And not having any prejudices might help you make a more shrewd purchase.

Buy on condition, not mileage. This is the key, according to Sam Bailey of The SL Shop. "If I had the choice of a line of identical condition 107s, each with a different engine from the range, the 450 would be the last I'd pick," he says. "If the 450 was the best condition of the cars in that line-up, I would not hesitate to hand over my hard earned and drive it away with a smile."

"The large, slender steering wheel, attached to an assisted recirculating-ball system, asks only for small, slight movements"



LEFT
Classic interior, with clear yellow on back dials and a fairly large steering wheel.

RIGHT
An R107 roadster with a genuine low mileage is worth paying top dollar for.

BELOW
14-inch wheels used until the '85 facelift, when 15s in a new design came in.



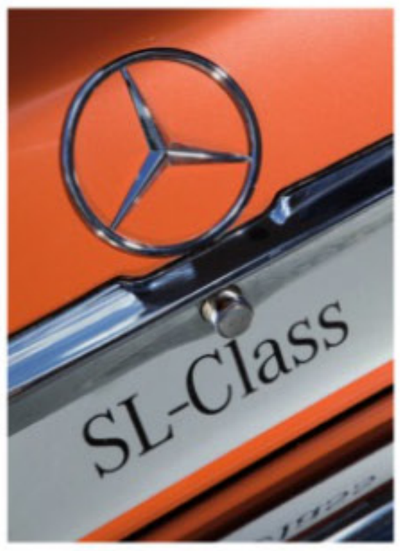


During our shoot this SL's colour was a talking point – yes, it is an original shade, called Inca Red, and as far as we can ascertain was available only on the R107 SL and the W100 600 from 1979 until 1981. In that time, 658 Inca Red Mercedes were produced, and although we do not know how many of these were SLs, it is hardly commonplace. When it comes to value, rarity can push the price up, or its obscurity can push it down. SL owners traditionally seek more sober shades, so perhaps this daring hue hurts its value, but as a prospective buyer this might help you get more for your money.

From behind the wheel it did not feel like any compromises had been made. It is a very glamorous, feel-good car, and you can't help but smile as you waft along. With just 21,500 miles on the clock, this 214bhp 1979 450SL still felt tight. The large, slender steering wheel, attached to an assisted recirculating-ball system, asks only for small, slight movements, making it an easy, relaxing drive, quick to respond, and with no slack around the centre. And there was only a touch of hesitation after depressing the throttle before the 4.5-litre engine wound up and got moving, a lovely, laid back V8 woofle the sophisticated accompaniment to our progress. Approaching a corner, the brakes were strong, and although through direction changes there was a refined wallow this was merely a reminder that this is a car for making swift but serene progress, not for chucking at corners.

However, to make sure it doesn't turn into a nightmare, go in with your eyes open, perform a thorough pre-purchase check of the vehicle and its paperwork and, ⇨

⇨ if you want a second opinion, ask a 107 SL specialist to inspect any prospective car – it could be money well spent. Unsurprisingly, a prime area of concern is rust, after all, the youngest R107 is a quarter of a century old, the youngest 450SL a decade more than that. Sam Bailey says to check for rust round the rear wheelarches, above and around the headlamps, on the lower door edges, the sills, the inner front and rear wheelarches, especially the lower front edge of the latter, and the front jacking points. "Panel fit should be 100 per cent consistent," he adds.





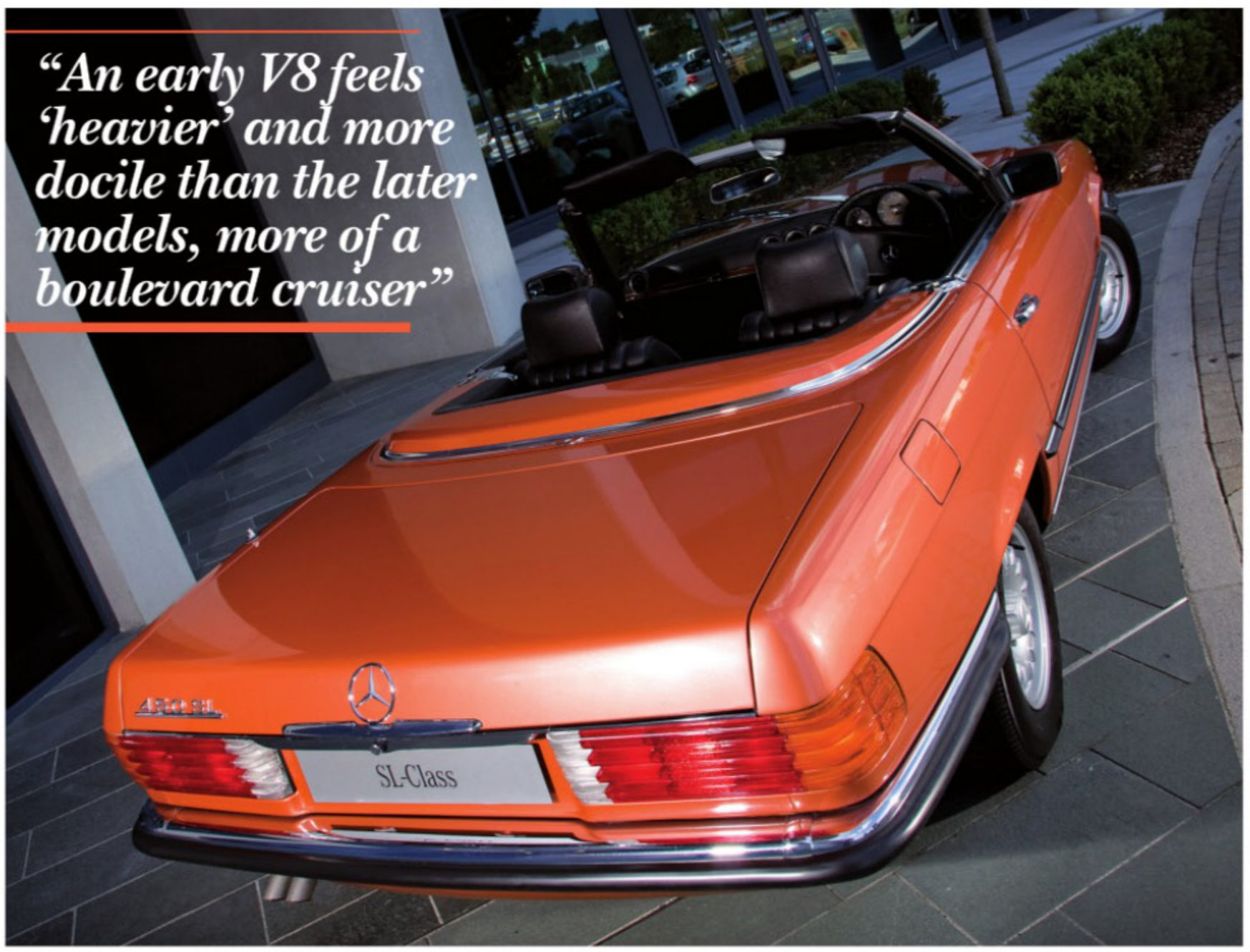
THIS PICTURE
Some might baulk at the rather sudden paintwork but black trim is safe.

LEFT
This generation of SL will appreciate in price – but only if in decent shape.

Other common problems include worn suspension components, the anti-roll bar links in particular, but Bailey says these cost under £100 to fix, the symptom being a rattle from the rear suspension. He also warns of water ingress, the heater and cruise control not working, and advises checking the condition of the interior. A further test is the tyres. "Elderly rubber with plenty of tread should still be changed," he insists. And if there is water in the front footwells, a misfire, the engine belches out blue smoke or has a bottom-end rattle, Bailey's advice is to walk away.

Yet he reckons there are some faults you can live with or fix later, malfunctioning headlamp wash/wipe and heated seats, and a small amount of water ingress included. Also check that the chassis number on the front slam panel matches that on the V5, and examine the service history. "These cars will withstand years of neglect before they start to present bigger bills," he tells us – and Wilford also underlines the importance of a car's history.

"An early V8 feels 'heavier' and more docile than the later models, more of a boulevard cruiser"



You should thoroughly test drive any car before buying, and Bailey has a few words on how 450SLs should feel. An early V8 feels heavier and more docile than the later models, more of a boulevard cruiser. "Check for suspension clonks. The cars are a little floaty, but there shouldn't be any slack or wander in the steering. The automatic gearbox should change smoothly – but can be slightly jerky on early-1970s cars – but the kickdown should be positive. And do the brakes pull you up square?"

To keep your R107 in good working order, Bailey recommends regular oil and filter changes – and to avoid long periods of inactivity. "It is better to store an SL under cover in a dry, well-ventilated space, but a good car will withstand being left outside," he says. "Try to drive it 20 miles every three to four weeks. "To ensure the longevity of your soft top, stow it only when dry, and be sure that the space it folds into is clean and dry, too – and that as it goes back the windows and sides are neatly tucked in.

These cars need to be treated well – but this does not have to be costly. The SL Shop quotes £228.50 for a full V8 service (more prices at www.theslshop.com) and Bailey advises using only the correct-specification parts. "A few parts – and usually trim – are available only from Mercedes-Benz, and can be expensive. And always use genuine body panels if restoring." Mercedes' fuel economy figure for the 450SL is 19.5mpg, Bailey agreeing that you can expect low 20s on a run but nearer 15mpg round town, so the 4,520cc V8 will not be cheap to fuel. But the SL dream can become a reality, thanks to some prudence when purchasing. CM

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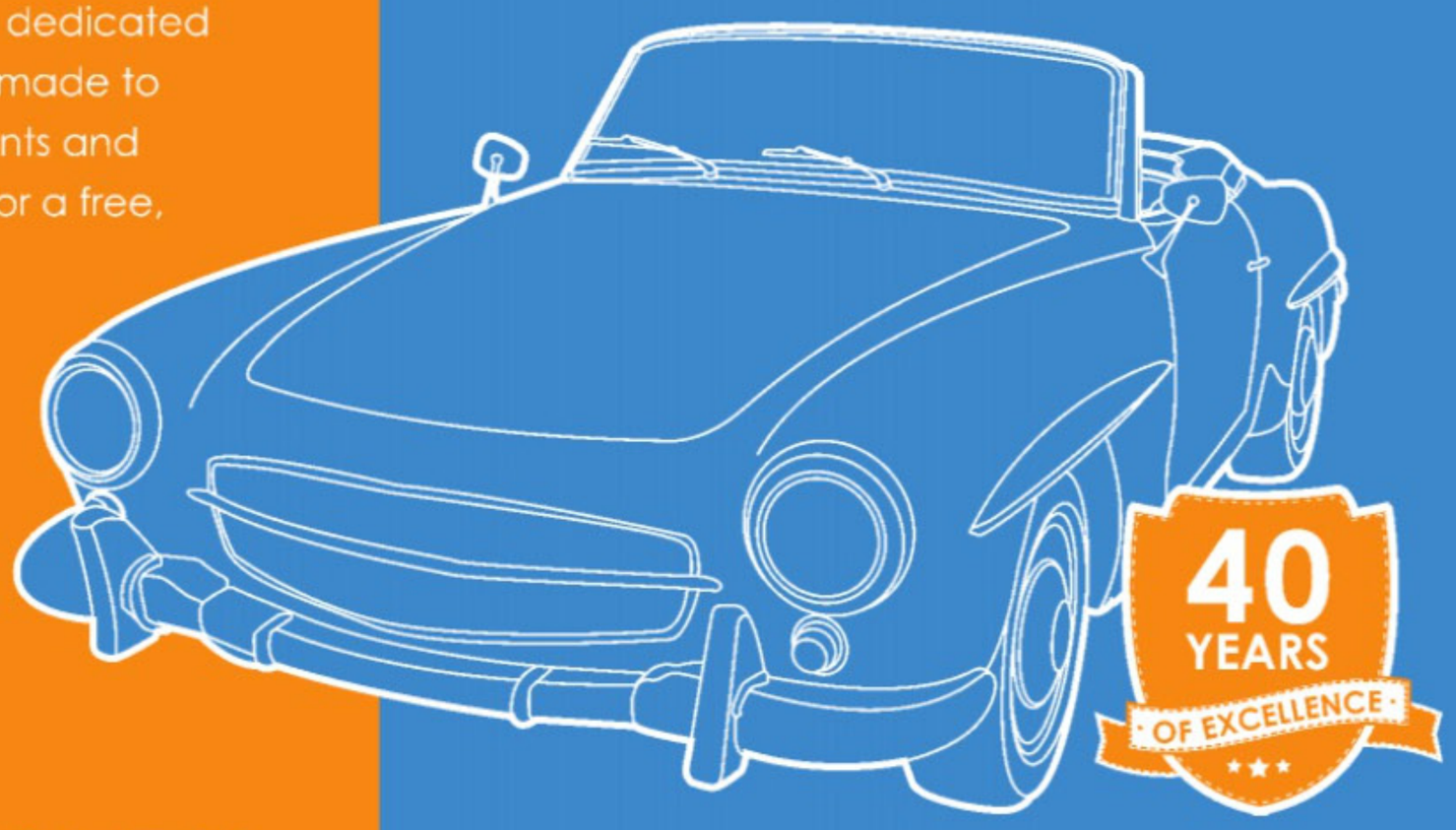
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fig 1. 1957 Mercedes-Benz 300SL

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"With Pagodas going stratospheric in price, and even R107s firming up strongly, R129s seem curiously under appreciated"

Modern

age

It lacks the elegant style of its predecessors, but the R129, launched 25 years ago, was packed with technology, which made it the most sophisticated roadster of its day, says former 500SL owner Martin Buckley

IMAGES
Eric Richardson

Has there ever been a better value classic Mercedes roadster than the 1989 to 2001 R129 SL? Prices are bottoming out at as little as £1,500, and while no one would expect one at that level to be a lot of laughs, for as little as £5,000 you can still buy a really very nice car with all the history and reassurances of careful ownership you could ever wish for.

I can say that with confidence because I have done it myself – twice, in fact, both times with really clean 500SLs that drove beautifully and never had a major problem. Both were low-mileage examples that had spent most of their lives probably cosseted, garaged and regularly serviced – and certainly never raced or rallied. There are still many such SLs to be found for a fraction of the £50,000, £60,000 or even £70,000-plus they cost their first owners.

With Pagodas going stratospheric in price, and even R107s firming up strongly, R129s seem curiously under appreciated, although it is not difficult to see one thing that is holding them back. There are simply too many left out of the 204,900 that were built over a dozen years.

There have been two subsequent generations of SL, making Bruno Sacco's crisp-edged shape look increasingly dated in Mercedes terms, although once the tired looking examples (that are starting to appear in increasing numbers) have been sifted out by a natural process of attrition, we may have a different perspective on it. As things stand, however, bereft of chrome, it is admittedly harder to pigeonhole the R129 as 'classic' than it is the R107.



ABOVE
Electric seat adjustment standard, though three position memory extra.



"The long awaited R129 was as 'all new' as Mercedes ever allowed itself to go when introducing a fresh model"



ABOVE
The cabin styling is very reserved, but build quality was of the highest order.



ABOVE
A R129 SL could never be called a sports car, but it is fast and feels very secure.



Specifications



Mercedes-Benz 500SL
(R129)

Engine	M119 4,973cc V8
Power	322bhp@5,600rpm
Torque	332lb ft@3,900rpm
0-62mph	6.2sec
Max speed	155mph
Transmission	4-speed manual
Fuel consumption	21.4mpg
Weight	1,770kg
Years built	1989-2001
Number produced	94,048

All figures from Mercedes-Benz; figures for a 1989-1992 500SL as pictured

Designed in the mid-1980s on a shortened 124-series platform, in engineering terms this generation of SL represented a huge improvement over the previous R107, which was a late 1960s design introduced in 1971. The R107's continued popularity, and the cost of tooling up for a replacement which in general terms would sell in relatively small numbers compared to its saloon counterparts, had dissuaded the car maker from replacing it sooner. But the long-awaited R129 was as 'all new' as Mercedes ever allowed itself to go when introducing a fresh model. There were no 'poverty' versions of the new SL, although if you insisted a manual gearbox was available in the six-cylinder models. All cars had climate control, electric windows, full leather and anti-lock brakes as standard, as well as airbags and the latest restraint systems, ASR anti-skid and even adaptive damping in some variants.



ABOVE
Most R129s are automatic, four-speed up until 1995, and five-speed thereafter.

In fact, this new SL wondercar had a power hood and all kinds of refinements and driver aids that made it the most complete and thoroughly engineered roadster on the market, and also a hugely safe one that even included a roll bar that popped up automatically if it sensed the car was about to flip. You would need to be trying hard to get it to that stage, however, its multi-link rear suspension giving the R129 a tenacious poise its predecessor had never known.



The initial range comprised two 300SL three-litre straight-sixes, with 12 or 24 valves and 187bhp and 228bhp, respectively, and the 322bhp, five-litre 500SL. The six-litre V12 389bhp 600SL was added to the line-up in 1992, for those who felt 0-62mph in the 500SL's 6.5 seconds was too slow, although it was limited to 155mph, like the V8.

Throughout production, V8s and V12s were always automatic, ⇨

LEFT
Five-litre V8 is smooth and punchy but still capable of reasonable fuel economy.



"Later on there was even a variety of special edition R129s, something that had been beneath the dignity of Mercedes in earlier times"



ABOVE
This actual 1989 500SL is the first R129 Mercedes ever imported to the UK.

BELOW RIGHT
Some space in the back but best to think of the SL as a civilised two-seater.

⇨ four-speed through to 1995, electronic five-speed thereafter. Including the various monstrously powerful V8 and V12 AMG variants, and a pair of 18-valve SL280 V6s (giving between 201bhp and 221bhp) the number of engines used in the R129 totals 13.

For 1994 the range was facelifted. Also, the SL moniker now prefixed the engine size indication (so that the 500SL, for instance, became the SL500) and the three-litre engines were replaced by new 2.8- and 3.2-litre straight-sixes, creating the SL280 and SL320 models.

Later there was even a variety of special edition R129s, something that had been beneath the dignity of Mercedes in earlier times, but was now felt necessary to help sell the car, particularly as it became an elder statesman in the range in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Mille Miglia Limited edition commemorated Stirling Moss's win in the famous endurance event in 1955, while the Silver Arrow alluded to the Mercedes grand prix cars of the 1930s and 1950s. The changes only amounted to minor trim, paint and road wheel differences. Nothing to get too excited about, although I always quite fancied the panoramic glass roof offered in 1997, towards the end of production.

The R129 feels expensive, and also makes you feel special. It is pretty quick, but never intimidating to drive, and with the roof on it is like a compact two-door saloon with little appreciable wind noise – and no leaks. Despite its tiny rear seats you could use it every day like a normal car, it being one of the most practical roadsters of its time.

I wouldn't dismiss a six-cylinder. But at the same time I fail to see the point of them when the big V8 is so delightfully and effortlessly quick and, driven sensibly, can give fuel consumption in the high 20s.

I always think the 500SL is a bit 'girly', but I like it anyway. I love the power seats, the smooth action of the fully automated power hood, and the way the car was ready to take the world on from the moment you flick the key. It feels hefty and it is, at 1,890kg, but that only adds to the sense of security . Modern drivers might think the steering – still a rather old-fashioned box rather than a rack-and-pinion system – vague, but the way the car digs in and fires you out of corners is most satisfying. CM



Owning a 500SL

Martin Buckley describes the two that have passed through his hands

My first 500SL was Silver with AMG wheels. I bought it from my local MOT tester who simply stood outside his unit with a 'for sale' sign in the window. It showed less than 40,000 miles, and he said he had only used it a few times for "going to the casino in Bristol".

I bought it to sell, but could rarely prise its keys from the sweaty grip of my girlfriend, who was besotted with a car that still felt so fresh and almost new, even although it was almost 20 years old. There were some minor problems with the power hood, and getting the hardtop on and off could be a bit of a struggle, if only because it was so heavy.

But it was as solid as you would expect a Mercedes to be. There was not a spot of rot on this car, or the next SL I bought, a blue example, also low mileage but still on its standard wheels, and suffering a bit from a lack of use. I bought it from my friend's mechanic, who had in turn bought it as a present for his wife, but found she preferred her Range Rover. These were not freak purchases, by the way, as I have stumbled across three or four similarly good cars since.



Buckley's girl friend was in love – with his 500SL.

"My blue 500SL occasionally struggled to run on all eight cylinders, but injector cleaner and a good thrash up the road sorted that"

My blue 500SL – registered G6 CUT – occasionally struggled to run on all eight cylinders, but injector cleaner and a good thrash up the road sorted that out. The SL Shop near Redditch did a nice job of replacing the split rear window, and once that was sorted we were away and ready to enjoye the SL.

I have to admit I was more interested in my £1,000 1977 Jaguar XJ-S which had similar performance (in theory) but used twice as much fuel. Actually, despite my natural aversion to anything built after 1975, I have to say I was totally impressed with my 500SLs, even if they are not the best looking or most romantic of the SL generations.



As with his first 500SL, the second was low mileage.

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IMAGES Richard Truesdell

SUMMER BLISS

Life next to the ocean in southern California is definitely enhanced by the presence of a convertible classic Mercedes in the garage. **David Sutherland** met Helmut Reiss, a local man fortunate enough to have three of them

Helmut Reiss arrived in St Louis , Missouri, from Germany in 1952, aged 15. It marked the beginning of his six-decade love affair with cars. "I've been a car enthusiast since I was old enough to have a driving licence,' he says. "I would buy cars, and then upgrade to a better model."

In the early days, before the concept of the classic car even existed, his transport of choice was American metal. "I had to have a Cadillac, I had a 1950, a '52, a '53 Eldorado – that was my favourite – and a '63 model." After Reiss opened his restaurant in Laguna Beach in 1977, a lush beach resort in southern California, his prosperity saw his tastes change to the prestigious marque of his homeland.

He has never been a car dealer, and has never advertised cars for sale, but soon the classic Mercedes community got to know of his fondness for a deal. The presence of whatever classic Mercedes he owned at the time outside his restaurant, Rothchild's, no doubt encouraged a few enquiries.

Today his fleet comprises a 1956 300Sc Coupe and its convertible twin, a 1957 300Sc Roadster, a 1962 300SL Roadster, a 1969 280SL Pagoda and a 280SE 3.5 Cabriolet. The model he has bought and sold most frequently is the W198 300SL Roadster. When asked how many, the most precise he can be without looking up the details is "12 to 15", meaning that possibly one per cent of the entire production run has passed through his hands through the years.

Relaxing on the patio of the Swiss



RIGHT
Helmut's garage is a man cave to die for, packed with his classic car collection.



chalet-style house he built in 1983, which enjoys a spectacular ocean view, the anecdotes flow easily. But while a US citizen since 1955, Reiss seems to retain more than enough of his European roots to be bemused by the

"HE HAS NEVER ADVERTISED CARS, BUT THE CLASSIC COMMUNITY GOT TO KNOW OF HIS FONDNESS FOR A DEAL"

finer points of the American mindset.

"Customers knew I was a car enthusiast. One time, in 1985, I had my 1955 300S Coupe parked out the front of the restaurant, and a couple came in and asked to look at it. It was ⇨

Mercedes-Benz 300Sc Roadster (W188)



Year built 1957
Bought 1985
Engine M199 2,996cc 6-cyl

"This is a car I am extremely passionate about. I had two 300S Coupes [the earlier version, with carburettors rather than fuel-injection] before it, one black with a tan interior, and the other maroon and tan. A friend called and told me, 'I have something you want – get here by 9.30am tomorrow.' What he didn't say was that he had told other people the same thing. But I had first choice.

The 300Sc cost $155,000, but I wanted the car badly. I wondered how I was going to pay for it, and I had to hang out on the branch to raise the money – but he gave me some time to pay for it.

To me, this car is majestic. With its huge front wings and headlamps it reminds me of the great Mercs of the 1930s, such as the 540s. But it's also a combination of styles from before and after World War Two.

This car needs to be driven, but on touring roads. I have to know where I'm going, and what the parking is like – I don't, for instance, go to Los Angeles in it because it is a very heavy car to drive. But the way the doors shut is a statement in itself – the 300Sc is built like a Swiss vault."







CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
300Sc's interior is exquisite, with lovely red hide and polished wood; this was the last Mercedes with a big upright grille and separate wings; main badging did not change when the 300Sc replaced the 300S; however fuel-injection hiked the three-litre engine 25bhp to 173.



280SE 3.5 Cabriolet (W111)



Year built 1971
Bought 2012
Engine M116 3,499cc V8

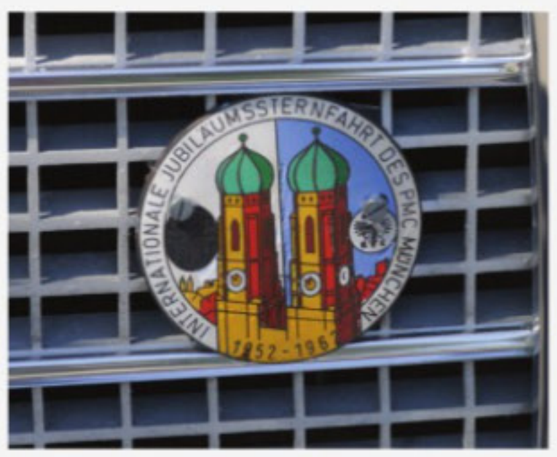
"Before this I had a very similar car in silver, but a man in Denver contacted me and offered $169,000 for that, without even seeing it. I thought that was a rather strange price and asked him about it. He said, 'it's a very pretty car, but I didn't want to go over $169,000 for it.'

I bought this car with the proceeds, and it is in better condition. It came from New Jersey, where there is a lot of rain, but there is no rust. Every car has a weak point for rust, and on the W111 it is the boot floor – but on this car there is none there at all. It was a car that was used just for golfing. We think it has done about 40,000 miles, but we're not sure because the odometer was not working for a while.

This is also a crisper car than my previous one. It drives without any rattles, you can drive over railroad crossings and not feel them. It is also relatively new for me, so you can stop at any Mercedes dealer and get parts for it, and there are still plenty of good mechanics around who know how to work on it."









CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Helmut loves to flip the roof on his 280SE and visit the beach, but the highway along the ocean can get busy; lettering shows this, with its V8, to be the ultimate W111; grille badge shows the owner's German roots; dark brown bodywork set off very nicely by tan leather seats.

November, Beaujolais Nouveau time, so they sat in the 300S drinking wine while they considered whether to buy it.

"Meantime, someone else came by and said, 'Is this car for sale?' I said, 'I think so,' and he asked how much. I said $38,000, and he asked, 'Will you take $37,000?' I agreed. He told me to put it on his credit card and sat down and ordered dinner.

"The people who had been sitting in the car came up to me and said, 'We like it, can we talk about the price?' but the credit card payment had gone through by then, so I had to tell them,



"I SHIPPED THE 300SL OVER TO GERMANY IN 2005 FOR THE 300SL CONVENTION, YOU HAVE TO ALLOW SIX WEEKS FOR IT TO GET THERE"

'There's nothing to talk about.' They blew their hat at that."

The acquisition of the only 300SL Gullwing Reiss ever owned was memorable. "In 1985 a women in Santa Monica wanted to sell a Gullwing. She was quite tricky to deal with, and she was asking $45,000, but I only wanted to give $42,500 for it.

"I called later and asked the guy who answered, 'Is your wife there?' He said, 'Talk to me, not my wife, she's not here right now.' When I made my offer to him, he said, 'How fast can you get over to Santa Monica with the money?' I said, 'I can be there in two hours."

In 1995 a collector in Berlin wanted to buy a 300SL Roadster from Reiss. "On the Monday I sold him the car, and asked him how he wanted to ship it – by sea? 'No, by air,' he told me.

"I got in touch with a friend, Pete, who was a captain for Lufthansa. A 747-200 freight plane was coming in from Mexico to Los Angeles on Tuesday, and leaving for Germany on

300SL Roadster (W198)



Built 1962 **Bought** 1998
Engine M198 2,996cc 6-cyl

"I bought this 16 years ago, in 1998, from a German friend in Santa Monica who was going through a divorce. He had a small collection, three cars – he was sad to see them all go.

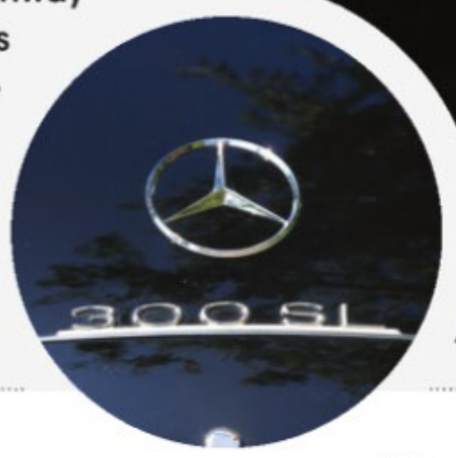
I use it for touring and some good highway driving. I've driven it to Vancouver in Canada when the annual Gull Wing Convention was there [300SL Roadsters are welcomed at this event].

I also shipped the 300SL over to Germany in 2005 for the 300SL Convention. I did that on a special tourist import basis, and you have to allow six about weeks for it to get there.

I drove it about 6,500 miles. I drove it to Denmark, and then to Rome through France. It never let me down, I just turned the key and it ran, and the only thing I had to do to it was change the oil. I kept it in Germany for three years, where I have a home.

My most recent event in it was the Colorado Grand. That's about 1,000 miles from here, and we drove 1,000 miles through the Colorado Rockies. The event was in aid of the State Highway Patrol fund for widows and orphans, and we were told we should not drive fast near towns. No speeding tickets were issued."





Wednesday. They had to bump off some cargo to get it on, so it cost him $13,000. But it arrived on Thursday and he was able to take part in a classic car rally in Berlin on Saturday." A blown up, framed photo of the car waiting to be loaded onto the Boeing is among the delightful clutter of memorabilia that competes for space with the cars in Reiss's large garage, where he undertakes basic lubrication servicing on all of his cars.

Sometimes deals too good to refuse have come up and practically bumped Reiss on the nose. "In 1982 a guy drove up in a 300SL Roadster," he recalls. "I didn't really want it – it was filthy, and black with a tan interior. He said, 'I need $25,000 and I need to sell it today'. "I told him I would give him $16,000 and that the offer would last until 4pm. He said no to that, and went away. At 10 minutes to four he came back and asked me, 'Is that offer still good?'"

Reiss attends around half a dozen classic events a year, and tends to enjoy his cars locally, in the guaranteed sunshine of California – he does not believe in trailering cars to destinations, a common practice among high-end classic car owners in the US. But now and again a more ambitious trip is undertaken, such as attending the 50th anniversary celebrations of the 300SL in Germany – with his 300SL, of course.

The wheeler dealer in Reiss suggests that everything in his collection is for sale if the price is right, but there is an emotional aspect, too. "As long as I am in love with a car I own, I cannot sell it," he admits.

INSET
A more evocative badge on a post-war Mercedes you will simply not see.

ABOVE RIGHT
This red driver's seat has supported Helmut over many thousands of miles.

RIGHT
Helmut's son Karl, driving through southern Germany in 1999 in Dad's 300SL.

FAR RIGHT
Pretty much has to be the ideal cabrio collection for the Mercedes classic fan.





UNDER THE HAMMER

Prices of the most sought after classic Mercedes models have continued the upward trend of early 2014. A major international auction house, RM Auctions, brings us the full details of four notable cars it has sold recently

AMELIA ISLAND, FLORIDA, USA

Movie star

Bought new in 1957 by Hollywood starlet Natalie Wood, and meticulously restored in 2000, this 300SL Roadster climbed easily through its top pre sale estimate to make $1.84m

IMAGES markstaffphotography.com/RM Auctions

Lot 122
1957 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster

There was no doubt that Mercedes-Benz had a hit on its hands with its spectacular 300SL Gullwing. The car's looks, performance and brilliant engineering captivated the automotive world, and it proved to be a runaway success for Mercedes-Benz. After production ended on the iconic Gullwing coupe, the marque was eager to add a convertible version to its model line-up.

A prototype of this new model was first spotted in the summer of 1956 at Stuttgart, by the German magazine *Auto Motor und Sport*, while the production model would later debut at the 1957 Geneva motor show. By the end of that year, the final 70 of the 1,400 Coupes and the first 618 of the 300SL Roadsters had been assembled.

Along with a convertible top, the 300SL Roadster brought a host of advancements to the already state-of-the-art 300SL platform. The central section of the 300SL's space-frame chassis was lowered, the sills were smaller, and the doors were enlarged, in order to allow improved entrance and egress. Strength was maintained, though, by the addition of diagonal struts, which braced the lowered side sections to the tubular rear members. The suspension was also revised to allow for a more comfortable ride and improved handling. At the rear, the spare tyre was repositioned below the boot floor, necessitating a smaller fuel tank, but also maintaining reasonable luggage space. While these revisions added some 100kg, with the majority of the weight being associated with the convertible top and its mechanisms, the car remained an excellent performer, with a factory-claimed 137mph top speed.

Year 1957
Engine/power M198 2,996cc/212bhp
Chassis/engine/body no 198.042.7500569/198.980.7500545/198.042.7500493
Auction Amelia Island, Florida
When March 8, 2014
Pre sale estimate $1,400,000-$1,750,000
Price achieved $1,842,500 (about £1,113,600, includes 12 per cent buyer's premium)

Just like the Coupe, the 300SL Roadster proved to be the vehicle of choice for those with excellent taste in aesthetics and cutting edge engineering. As such, many wound up in the garages of celebrities, racing drivers, and other successful individuals. With a list price of $11,000 in the US, ownership of a 300SL Roadster was a dream to most when the car was new, but to those with the funds to spare, the car was worth every penny. To those looking to make a statement with the purchase of a new vehicle, there was simply no better option back in 1957.



This 300SL Roadster was one of only about 25 fitted by the factory with the extremely desirable Rudge wheels; they were more often seen on the Gullwing. In January 1958 it was bought new by none other than Hollywood actress Natalie Wood (pictured).

Wood's starring role in the classic 1947 film *Miracle on 34th Street* propelled her to A-list status at the age of nine, and by 1955 she had been nominated for an Academy Award for her performance as Judy in *Rebel Without a Cause*. She bought her Roadster at the age of 19, a month after marrying fellow actor Robert Wagner. It was the perfect automobile for Natalie Wood, as both car and driver were young, fashionable, beautiful, and brimming with talent.

Even though her new Roadster was painted in a gorgeous shade of Mercedes-Benz Silver (DB180) with ⇨

"ALONG WITH A CONVERTIBLE TOP, THE 300SL ROADSTER BROUGHT A HOST OF ADVANCEMENTS TO THE ALREADY STATE-OF-THE-ART 300SL PLATFORM"

SL SPECIAL
W198
1957-1963







ABOVE
It wasn't just the Mercedes grille that made this the most exclusive sports car.

ABOVE RIGHT
The 300SL Roadster, with its soft top, replaced the 300SL Gullwing in 1957.

RIGHT
Rudge knock-off wheels were a very desirable option on the Roadster.

FAR RIGHT
Natalie Wood had this 300SL resprayed pink, but kept the red leather inside.





⇨ a Red (641) leather interior, Wood had the car resprayed bright pink, but she retained the red leather. It could be argued that no other car in Hollywood attracted more attention, especially with a gorgeous young actress behind the wheel. The 300SL clearly had quite an impact on Wood, and even after parting with her pink Roadster in the 1960s, she was often seen in other vehicles adorned with the three-pointed star.

"IT WAS THE PERFECT AUTOMOBILE FOR NATALIE WOOD, AS BOTH CAR AND DRIVER WERE YOUNG, FASHIONABLE, BEAUTIFUL, AND BRIMMING WITH TALENT"

The Roadster was later owned, in 1978, by Don McColl, an enthusiast in Ontario, Canada, and it was reported to have been returned to the original colour combination at that time. In 2000 it was fully restored by the noted 300SL expert Rudi Koniczek, of Rudi & Company situated in Victoria in British Columbia, Canada.

The car was refinished in a brilliant shade of Silver Blue (353 G), with a dark blue convertible top and once again a red leather interior. Interestingly, the paint seems to change in different settings, as it appears silver in most conditions, but a subtle hint of blue will emerge when under bright sunlight. Mechanical authenticity was a top priority in restoring the car, and as such it is factory correct in every detail, even down to the correct hose clamps in the engine bay. The original Rudge wheels are fitted with modern limited-production Dunlop tyres that were specially designed for the 300SL. The car is offered with a complete set of books and tools, an original Rudge spare wheel, and a period correct Becker radio, and it is fitted with the more desirable European headlights.

In 2010, under the stewardship of its current owner, the 300SL Roadster participated in the Colorado Grand, where it performed effortlessly for the entirety of the rally, proving to be a comfortable and competent high-speed tourer. Then, in 2012, it had the honour of returning to Hollywood, where it was displayed by Mercedes-Benz USA in the exclusive *SL@*

BELOW
The 300SL introduced the solid metal hood cover that SLs since have used.

BELOW RIGHT
Our from the three-litre straight-six is 212bhp, very healthy for 1957.

BELOW FAR RIGHT
Unlike the Gullwing, the Roadster has side- rather than top-hinged doors.









Hollywood – Celebrating 60 Years of a Living Legend exhibition at the Warner Bros Studios in Los Angeles, California. This exhibition served to show the connection of the SL family of cars to Hollywood's elite.

This particular Roadster was used to represent the model for the 1950s, and it was displayed among other generations of Mercedes-Benz SLs up to the present model. Celebrating Natalie Wood's career, it was put on display with other items owned and often associated with the actress.

Later that year, the Roadster would remain in the limelight, as it made an appearance at the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance. This was a special year for the SL at Amelia Island, as the concours was celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Mercedes-Benz 300SL and its win at Le Mans in 1952. It was also a special event for this example, as it was awarded with Best in Class honours amid an excellent field.

RIGHT
The actress's car was fully restored 14 years ago, and has been a prize winner.



BELOW
Over the Gullwing, the Roadster had vertically placed minor instruments.

BOTTOM
The chrome bumpers are such a key part of the car's unique and iconic styling.

BOTTOM RIGHT
A sloping tail means you need to be quite sparing with the luggage you carry.

Having put nearly 3,000 miles on the car since the completion of its restoration, the consignor notes that everything on the 300SL works perfectly, down to the original clock. It has proved its worth as both a touring and concours level machine, being as comfortable at speed as it is parked on a concours lawn. Combined with the added bonus of its celebrity provenance, the most desirable factory option of Rudge wheels, and an utterly ravishing colour combination, this is one of the finest 300SL Roadsters. CM









PARIS, FRANCE

Silver bullet

One of the most glamorous open grand tourers of the early 1950s, this Mercedes-Benz 300S Roadster has a fascinating royal history

IMAGES Tim Scott/Neumann Photography/RM Auctions

Lot 36
Mercedes-Benz 300S Roadster

Bridging the gap between the 'classic' and 'modern' eras, the Mercedes-Benz 300 was launched in 1952, with an unbeatable combination of modern engineering and performance and meticulous 'old world' build quality. It was built to uncompromising standards, and employed the latest materials and technologies to achieve maximum power and minimum weight. Each car was lavished with beautiful finishes and woodwork, and each could travel at triple-digit speeds with a full load of cosseted occupants and their luggage.

The 300 S was built upon the already sumptuous top-range 300-series chassis, with special attention given to appearance details and build quality. The extraordinary costs to do so resulted in a 'halo' car for Mercedes-Benz, which was priced nearly 50 per cent higher than its counterparts. This car was equipped with triple Solex carburettors that were mounted to the 2,996cc engine, which could produce 150 horsepower (148bhp), and it was undoubtedly one of the best luxury touring cars available in the 1950s.

The sportiest 300S variant was the Roadster, which was a dashing convertible that had a top that folded completely flat, giving the car a very elegant appearance. Only 141 were produced, and they are now the most desirable 300Ss among enthusiasts.

Year	1953
Engine/power	M188 2,996cc/148bhp
Chassis/engine/body no	188.012.00301.53/ 188.920.00690.52/ 188.18.00102.53
Auction	Paris
When	March 8, 2014
Pre-sale estimate	€500,000-€700,000
Price achieved	€448,000 (about £373,800, includes 12 per cent buyer's premium)

A copy of this Roadster's original Daimler-Benz data card, which is on file, notes that the car was purchased by the Ferrikh Company of Iran, and was originally delivered to Geneva, Switzerland. A long standing story that accompanies the car is that it was bought by West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer as a gift for Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, then the Shah of Persia. As the Shah was in Geneva at the time, the car was delivered there.

"IT WAS BOUGHT BY WEST GERMAN CHANCELLOR KONRAD ADENAUER AS A GIFT FOR MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI, THE SHAH OF PERSIA"

While no additional documentation exists to support the story, the car was delivered completely in green, including the paint, the leather trim, and even the hood fabric. This seems appropriate, as green is one of the colours of the Persian flag, and is a colour of great significance in Iranian culture.

Recently, this car was body-off restored with great care, and included in the work was a complete rebuild of the engine and mechanicals, as necessary, by renowned German Mercedes-Benz specialist Lars Rombelsheim. It was refinished in a sophisticated combination of Fishsilver Metallic paint over beautifully tailored red leather upholstery and a black fabric top. Other features include bumper guards, yellow driving lights, a Becker Mexico radio, and a lovely set of fitted luggage, including a hat box, which is painted in a striking olive and stows neatly in the boot.

As perhaps the finest German grand tourer of its era, this sporty 300S Roadster boasts intriguing history, a superb restoration in striking colours, and excellent equipment. Whether its new owner's choice of destination is the Pacific Coast Highway, the German autobahn, or a curving Alpine pass, here is a class act of an automobile that is suitable for all occasions.

RIGHT
Fully restored red leather goes beautifully with the Roadster's silver paint.

FAR RIGHT
300S's six is fed by triple carburettors, which later gave way to fuel-injection.

BELOW LEFT
A six of fitted luggage adds to the luxury aura of this gorgeous convertible.

BELOW RIGHT
Production was 1952-55, after which the 300Sc model ran for two years.









Barn bombshell

Despite requiring a full restoration, this 600 made over four times its top pre-sale estimate

Lot 16
Mercedes-Benz 600 six-door Pullman landaulet

The world's most important people were driven in Mercedes-Benz 600s, and for the most important of those the 600 of choice was the Pullman landaulet. This custom-built behemoth, constructed on an imposing 3,900mm chassis, featured a folding convertible top over the rear seat, allowing its passengers to stand before their public during parades and other ceremonial occasions. It was such an exclusive car that it was never included in the 600 catalogue or price listing. Each was individually hand-crafted to order, matching the unique specifications of its original owner with a cost and level of craftsmanship that was usually more often associated with private aircraft.

Offered here is one of very few Pullman landaulets that have an interesting and unique early history and currently remain in private hands. It was one of a mere 26 produced with six doors, and it was specially ordered with the most advanced audiovisual equipment available in 1971: a nine-inch Sony television with all the ancillary equipment required, including an antenna on the rear deck; a Becker Grand Prix radio system with no fewer than eight interior speakers; and not least a telephone. All of this is surrounded by the comfort of optional armrests, the security of seat-belts, and the privacy of curtained windows.

This Pullman landaulet is remarkably complete, an ideal restoration project that is being offered by only its second owner, and it is thought the only six-door variant presently available for sale.





Year 1971
Engine/power M100 6,332cc/247bhp
Chassis/engine/body no 100.015.12.001861/100.980.12.001943/002111/7002
Auction Paris
When February 5, 2014
Pre sale estimate €80,000-€120,000
Price achieved €537,600 (about £448,560, includes 12 per cent buyer's premium)

RIGHT
The six-door landaulet is one of the rarest versions of the vast 600 limousine.

ABOVE RIGHT
This high sale price shows the increasing demand for unrestored classics.

Sports report

This Mercedes 'baby' roadster had just two owners in nearly 50 years

Lot 23
Mercedes-Benz 190SL Roadster

In 1954, Mercedes' competition inspired 300SL Coupe entered production. Few other cars could come close in either performance or style, but it also had a hefty price. New York imported car impresario Max Hoffman wanted a smaller and more affordable version to sell in volume.

The result was the 190SL, a stunning roadster in the style of the 300SL, which reached the market in 1955 and significantly outsold its bigger brother. The 190SL was powered by a 1.9-litre single overhead camshaft four, and it featured independent suspension.

This example, in black with dark green leather seats, including the third-seat option, benefits from known ownership history from new. It was delivered to its first owner, a Dr Thieden, who bought the car as a student and owned it for the next 27 years. In 1987 he sold the car to one Dr Hansel, who in 1990 carried out a full nut-and-bolt restoration with the renowned Esdar Classic Cars in Bielefeld, Germany. Dr Hansel owned the car for over 20 years. Since 2008, it has had just two additional owners, and has covered only 14,500km (9,000 miles) since its restoration.

This 190SL, presented in a stunning colour combination, is a fascinating example of a car that is now sought after in its own right – a 'little brother' that has come of age. CM





Year 1960
Engine/power M121 1,897cc/104bhp
Chassis/engine no 121.040.10.017417/121.921.10.017555
Auction Paris
When February 5, 2014
Pre sale estimate €120,000-€150,000
Price achieved €109,200 (about £91,186, includes 12 per cent buyer's premium)

RIGHT
In apperance, the 190SL was a smaller, convertible version of the Gullwing.

ABOVE RIGHT
It was restored 24 years ago but it still looks absolutely perfect today.

⇨ The descriptions and images of the 300SL Roadster, 300S Roadster, 600 Pullman landaulet and 190SL appear courtesy of RM Auctions Tel 020 7851 7070 Web www.rmauctions.com

S123 FOCUS

Room service

When they were new 30 years ago, 123-series estates were slow, expensive and not especially spacious – and yet vastly more desirable than other wagons on the market, David Sutherland recalls

IMAGES Terry Oborne



The 230TE provides a mix of lively performance and acceptable fuel economy.



Unhurried is the only way to describe the 200T, but it is certainly very relaxing.

"IF YOU WANTED MORE THAN CENTRAL LOCKING, A TAILGATE WASH-WIPE AND ROOF RAILS THE EXTRAS LIST HAD TO BE CONSULTED"

Q When would a modestly equipped estate car with a four-cylinder engine and mediocre performance be an object of desire?

A *In 1981, when Mercedes-Benz introduced the 200T, a basic spec 'T-Model', or S123 to the UK.*

Plushly equipped Ford Granadas and ballroom-sized Citroën CXs might have out-pointed the Mercedes wagon by a considerable margin on metal for money, but against the charisma and sheer snob appeal of Stuttgart's first full production estate they were nowhere. In the UK, customers cheerfully paid a third more for the basic S123 than for the equivalent Granada, helping bring about a sea change in estate car thinking: why bother offering a large load capacity that is rarely, if ever, used, when what owners really wanted was a good looker with some extra carrying space? The Ford, Citroën and Peugeot estates that were once so popular no longer hold sway, but the Mercedes-Benz C-Class and other compact estates thrive to this day.

Mind you, it was a shock to discover back then just how little Mercedes gave customers for their money with the S123 – apart, of course, from the beautifully formed rear body architecture and the build quality that was truly in a different league to that of most other cars. When launched in the UK in April 1981, the entry-level 200T came with a carburettor fed two-litre engine and a four-speed manual gearbox. The importer relented and made the five-speed manual transmission standard in September 1983, at least in the UK. But still if you wanted more than central locking, a tailgate wash-wipe and roof rails the extras list had to be consulted. Sound-system upgrade? The radio itself was extra, and very expensive if you went for the classy looking Becker unit.

But what did come with the S123 was well thought out. Self-levelling rear suspension was standard across the range, and if the load bay wasn't a winner on outright capacity it featured a wide, flat floor with minimal intrusion from the suspension, and a useful if shallow storage compartment below it. More load space could have been created by mounting the spare wheel on the underside of the boot floor, rather than in the load bay itself, but Mercedes no doubt calculated that the easier access to it in the event of a puncture may have been appreciated by owners more than some extra cubic inches.

For many years S123s were regarded as throwaway items. With most in a rusty state, and supplies of its S124 successor cheap and plentiful, there seemed little incentive to save them. And on the basis that you don't know what you have until it's gone, one day we woke up to find the S123 was one more endangered species, with sound, surviving examples suddenly in demand.

Specifications



Mercedes-Benz 200T (S123)

Engine	M102 1,997cc 4-cyl
Power	108bhp@5,200rpm
Torque	125lb ft@3,000rpm
Transmission	5-speed manual
Weight	1,470kg
0-62mph	15.3sec
Top speed	104mph
Fuel consumption	27.5mpg
Years produced	1980-1986
Number built	18,860

All figures from Mercedes-Benz





The 200T was the last 123 wagon introduced to the UK, arriving in spring 1981.

BELOW
An automatic option was available for the 200T but the manual box was better.



BOTTOM
The modest 108bhp forces you to plan overtaking as far in advance as possible.



"ON THE BASIS THAT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE UNTIL IT'S GONE, WE WOKE UP TO FIND THE S123 AN ENDANGERED SPECIES"

The exclusivity and relatively brief period on sale in the UK – four and a half years, until late 1985 – had kept numbers down in the first place, and in recent years the conservative but perfectly balanced body shape, with its ample but none the less tastefully applied chromework, has joined the ranks of past Mercedes models worth celebrating.

Thanks to Phil Spani of Mercedes-Benz specialist Gorgeous Cars in East Sussex (01323 871600, www.gorgeous-cars.com), we were able to try two well-preserved examples, a 1984 200T and its bigger engined sibling the 230TE, this one dating from 1983. The 'E' denoted fuel injection (introduced to the 230 in 1980), the 2.3-litre unit giving 134bhp as opposed to the 200T's 108bhp, and with 151lb ft torque, which was 26lb ft more.

Engine apart, only paint colour and a slight variation in optional extras differentiates them. Both have the standard colour-coded wheel trims of the day covering their 14-inch steel rims. These soup plate-proportioned hub caps are probably now regarded as more classic-looking than the optional alloy wheels, which is ironic since Spani as a young salesman at a Mercedes-Benz main dealer some 30 years ago recalls them being discarded or even used as frisbees when customers asked for alloy wheels.

These two cars amply demonstrate how colour preferences have changed through the years. The 230TE's gold metallic would have cost extra, but we are probably not taking liberties by saying it is a finish best left to the top-of-the-range bells and whistles Ford Ghias of the day with their deep pile velour trim. By contrast the flat, postbox red of the 200T is still striking, and perfectly complements the understated quality of the Mercedes.

To sit in an S123 is to be in a period car rather than a dated one. Hallmarks of past Mercedes are all around you, such as the huge steering wheel that brushes your knees if the driving seat is at its highest position. Then there is the shiny wood finish on the fascia and transmission tunnel, which looks well made, but contrasts markedly with the otherwise plainly trimmed cabin. The yellow-on-black instruments have a style and clarity that is hard to beat, and the sunken ⇨



Specifications



Mercedes-Benz 230TE (S123)

Engine
M102 2,299cc 4-cyl

Power
134bhp@5,100rpm

Torque
151lb ft@3,500rpm

Transmission
4-speed auto

Weight **1,480kg**

0-62mph **13.1sec**

Top speed **109mph**

Fuel consumption
26.7mpg

Years produced
1980-1986

Number built **42,284**

All figures from Mercedes-Benz

⇨ eyeball air vents, similar to those on the R107-model SL, are a perfect example of no effort being spared to get a small item looking right and working well.

These old Mercs really do feel well made. You see it in the detailing, for example the delightfully shaped, chrome-plated handle to pull back the manual sunroof. Or in the way the load bay floor section, which opens to reveal the underfloor stowage compartment, clunks solidly back into place when pushed closed.

Of course, a key question with any Mercedes-Benz from a previous generation is how well it drives. And in this respect the 123 estate scores well, provided you are not anticipating the crisp manners of a modern C- or E-Class wagon. The four-cylinder 200T took 15.3 seconds to reach 62mph from standstill, according to Mercedes, which made it a slow two-litre car, even by the less exacting standards of 1981.

But Mercedes has always done slow rather well, and once you become accustomed to the sedate pace, and hone your anticipation skills accordingly, the 200T becomes a pleasant and relaxing car to drive. And given that the Stromberg-fuelled engine has little or no power to spare, the 200T may prove the exception to the rule that older Mercedes are generally better with automatic transmissions. Although the gearshift on the manual gearbox lacks anything like enough precision, it is light and the clutch engagement smooth, easily allowing the engine to be worked to best effect.





TOP
Leather was a 123-series option but most cars were delivered with velour trim.

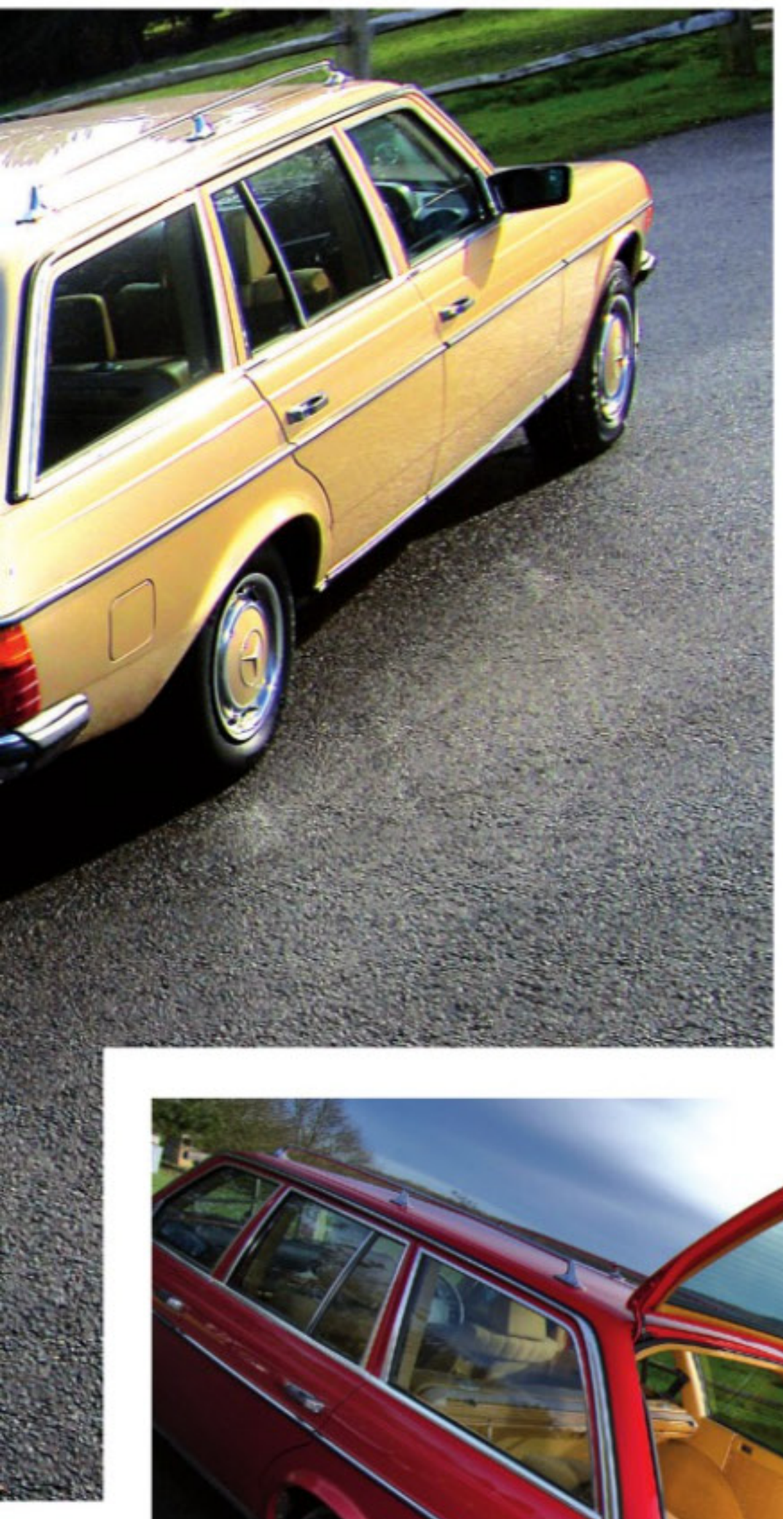
ABOVE
This 2.3-litre M102 looks a little scruffy, but should still have a long life ahead.

However, customers interested enough to take back-to-back test drives of the 200T and 230TE would surely fall for the latter, even though it, too, was untroubled by a high power output. But the need to pay an extra £2,500 no doubt kept the 200T in business.

The 230TE's Bosch-injected engine is slightly harsher when revved hard, but as would be expected it is notably more lively, even in performance sapping four-speed automatic form, as is this example. Like the carburettor-fed unit, the single-overhead-camshaft engine would be considered quiet and unobtrusive, even today. Injection also



Identical looking to the 200T, the 230TE was 25 per cent more expensive.



"MERCEDES HAS ALWAYS DONE SLOW RATHER WELL, AND ONCE YOU BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO THE SEDATE PACE THE 200T BECOMES A RELAXING CAR TO DRIVE"



Mercedes found that buyers would rather have style than ultimate load capacity.

meant that it was, in reality, no heavier on fuel than the 200T.

Drive both these cars and you will soon discover that the steering is a far cry from that of current Mercedes with their quick and accurate rack-and-pinion systems. Taking corners seems to require substantial arm twirling, but this is an illusion created by the vast helm, for the 3.2 turns lock to lock is quite normal. The recirculating-ball system by the nature of its design feels lifeless, but it damps road shocks most effectively. Couple this to the 123 estate's supple but not too roly-poly suspension and the result is a composed cruiser.

Mercedes took a long time to warm to the idea of estate cars, after an initial experiment with the 'Universal' version of the Fintail in the mid-1960s, in the process leaving the field wide open to specialist coachbuilders including Kent-based Crayford (whose conversions Stuttgart effectively endorsed). And even after the S123 was launched at the Frankfurt motor show in 1977 there was a gap of several years before it came to the UK.

But from an early stage the car proved how well a luxury estate could work, even if others offered more space for less money, a particular gem in the S123 range being the 280TE, which with its 2.8-litre straight-six is still a peach of a Mercedes. Audi soon followed with the aerodynamically impressive 100, after which BMW successfully marketed a 3-Series Touring. Mercedes-Benz itself replaced the S123 with the popular S124, and extended the idea of a 'baby' station wagon to the C-Class in 1996. Between them, the three German car makers – and Mercedes in particular – stole the premium compact estate market away from the high volume car manufacturers, and never gave it back. CM





TOP
Standard equipment on 123s did not stretch as far as electric windows, sadly.

ABOVE
Even the chrome-plated handle for the sunroof was beautifully designed.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Finding an S123 with mileage this low took a long time; David's car has the fold-out rear facing seat; it's been at Mercedes-Benz World for two years.



Owner's view David Brooks



It took two years to find the 123 estate of his dreams

As a Mercedes-Benz UK employee, David Brooks gets a new Mercedes company car about every four months. But he needed more – a 123 estate, to be precise. "Even before I worked for Mercedes-Benz I had always loved classic Mercedes, Gullwings and so on, but particularly the 123 estate, ever since my older brother had them in the early 1990s."

Two years ago, while working as the general manager of Mercedes-Benz World in Surrey, David fell into conversation with 123 specialist Mark Cosovich, and it wasn't long before he asked Mark to find him one. "I went for a drive in one, and found there is something you don't see in other cars," David insists. "They are so sturdy, so firm, and so well balanced."

David wanted the 230TE, generally reckoned to be the best model, with decent four-cylinder fuel economy but performance not too far off that of the six-cylinder 280TE. It took a while to find the right car, David discovering that it was lot more difficult to find a relatively modest model such as this in top condition than, for example, an immaculate SL Pagoda, many of which are offered for sale at any one time.

His red, 19,200-mile example, supplied by Cosovich, and having been christened the Red Baron, has been on permanent display at Mercedes-Benz World, and proved a popular exhibit. "People love it," David reveals. "Everyone seems to have known someone who had one."

His intention had been to drive it weekly. "It's too good for that, but it does get driven. I just given them a week's notice at Mercedes-Benz World and take it out. I might drive down to Kent to see my folks."

FOCUS S123

Practical

IMAGES Daimler AG

class

The 123-series estate was so costly to build that Mercedes-Benz didn't think right-hand drive would be viable. But a determined Brit persuaded management otherwise, explains Mark Cosovich



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"The cover story started here..."

Rees Bros are very proud to have restored the beautiful Mercedes 190SL featured in this magazine, transforming it from a wreck full of rust to the prize winning car it is today. If you have a similar project in mind, please contact us.

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As long ago as the 1950s, various coachbuilders had been converting Mercedes-Benz Ponton saloon cars into estates. Following a 'trial' production of the Fintail Universal estate from 1966 to 1968, assembly of which was farmed out to a Belgian firm, Mercedes decided to build a factory version of the 123-series saloon, scheduled for launch in 1976, and the design seems to have been pretty much settled on by the early 1970s – pictures from 1972 show a 'T-Model' from almost identical to the finished production car, presented at the 1977 Frankfurt motor show.

Mercedes decreed that, unlike estates from most other manufacturers, the large load bay capacity and increased towing capability of the proposed wagon (to be coded 'S123' rather than the saloon's 'W123') must not interfere with the exemplary handling and ride characteristics of the saloon, hence hydro-pneumatic self-levelling rear suspension was decided on. Fashioning the 123 saloon's rear floorpan to accept it called for some pretty serious design and engineering work.



TOP TO BOTTOM
Engineering the load bay for the 123 not a cheap exercise; the 1965-68 Universal estate was the S123's forerunner; at the 1978 Geneva motor show, when the new estate went on sale.



A fluid reservoir was positioned in the engine bay, with an engine-driven pump sending the hydraulic fluid to the rear self-leveling shock absorbers, via a control unit attached to the rear torsion bar. There were also nitrogen-filled spheres which, when loaded down by a heavy cargo in the car, or by the weight of a towed trailer, levelled the car to the correct ride height.

With an extra, rear facing seat optional, the tailgate was designed to absorb impact in a rear end collision, this heavy item adding over 120kg to the vehicle, some eight per cent of the T's unladen kerb weight. The unrelenting attention to detail carried over into the design of the tailgate struts and hinges, neatly concealed inside the rear part of the roof. Chrome roof bars accepted a wide range of accessories, from ⇨

"MERCEDES DECREED THAT THE LOAD CAPACITY AND INCREASED TOWING CAPABILITY OF THE WAGON MUST NOT INTERFERE WITH THE EXEMPLARY HANDLING AND RIDE OF THE SALOON"

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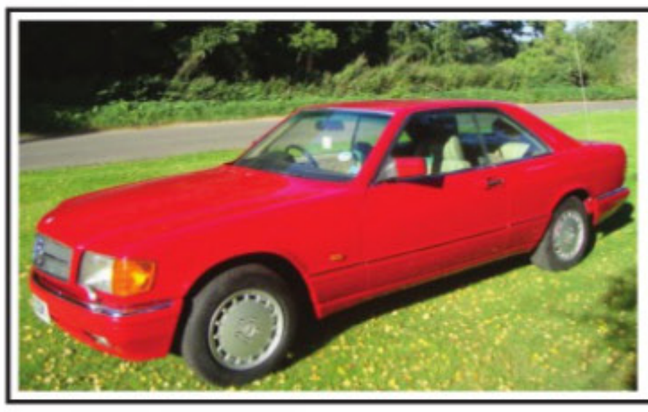
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However, producing this new model created a big problem for the company, because due to the insatiable demand for the 123 saloon that had already been introduced, no capacity existed at the Sindelfingen factory near Stuttgart. So a new manufacturing plant was built at Bremen in northern Germany to build both light trucks and the T-Model, with large numbers of staff relocated to the new site.

Another issue was cost. The W123 was already an expensive car, even in basic 200 form, and the T-Model (for 'Tourist and Transport') in fully optioned 280TE guise would not only be the most expensive model in the 123 range by far, but would rival even the S-Class of the time, the 116-series. A long and costly research programme was thus carried out to determine if there would be sufficient demand for a right-hand drive S123, given that it would be up against the Volvo 240/260 series, the sturdy if old fashioned Swede the long established leader in the UK's high end estate market.

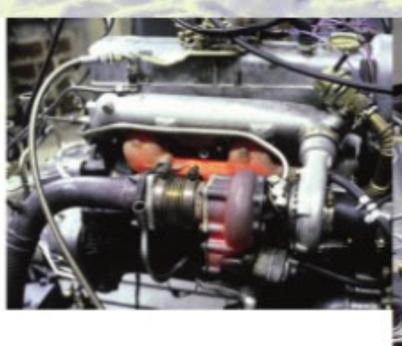
The researchers concluded that because the car would be so expensive there would be little demand. But Jon Ashman, then head of procurement at Mercedes-Benz UK, based in Brentford in west London, thought otherwise, and following his personal appeal to Daimler in Germany the car was finally produced in right-hand drive form. Introduced to mainland European markets from April 1978, the S123 was launched in the UK in May 1979, although few arrived before 1980, when the new crossflow engines were introduced.





TOP TO BOTTOM
During its production the S123, with its purposeful yet upmarket image was favoured by bike racing teams; it was a natural for Germany's taxi ranks; a smart looking rescue spec S123 with snow tyres; three-litre turbodiesel being tested, and a cutaway view of the M102 four-cylinder.







"DUE TO THE INSATIABLE DEMAND FOR THE 123 SALOON THAT HAD ALREADY BEEN INTRODUCED, NO CAPACITY EXISTED AT THE SINDELFINGEN FACTORY"

Some 1980 price comparisons highlight the car maker's concerns on cost. The cheapest of the three-model range (12-16 per cent extra was charged over the equivalent W123s) was the diesel-engined 240TD, priced at £10,430, which was almost £4,000 or over half as much again than the base Volvo estate, the 245GL, which was also better equipped. The six-cylinder petrol 250T cost £11,708, and the fuel-injected 280TE £13,837, the latter – whose standard equipment stretched no further than central locking – £3,429 more than the Ford Granada 2.8i Ghia estate with its most comprehensive specification. Just £621 (about £2,300 in today's money) separated the 280TE from the base S-Class, the 280SE.

The range was soon extended to include a cheaper entry-level model, the carburettor-fed 200T. But at £9,350 it was still way above comparably sized and similarly engined estates. Interestingly, the 280TE was not the most expensive Mercedes five-door on sale then – Crayford, the Kent-based independent, but Mercedes-approved, coachbuilder was still offering its 116-series conversion, the 280SE Estate priced at £18,958, making it Britain's most exclusive estate car.

Rather than a lack of demand, right from the start the waiting list at dealers for any S123 was six to eight months. Immediately, a new and affluent type of owner sought these vehicles, and the large estate was no longer the preserve of the antique seller. Here, finally, was a stylish load carrier ideal for trips to the country, but equally at home outside an expensive city hotel or fashionable restaurant.

Out of a total production of nearly 2.7 million 123s until early 1986, 199,517 were the T-Model. The most popular was the four-cylinder petrol-engined 230TE, with 42,284 sold in the six years from 1980, while the 240TD, despite its normally aspirated 2.4-litre diesel mustering ⇨

⇨ a mere 71bhp, was number two with 38,903 delivered. 19,789 flagship 280TEs were made.

Other manufacturers, including Audi, Citroën and Peugeot did offer large diesel estates, but the S123 was the only one that could be optioned up to a full luxury specification, and both the five-cylinder 300TD and 300TD Turbodiesel were popular at the time, with production of 36,874 and 28,219, respectively. The latter is currently the most sought after variant in Germany, according to the W123 Club there (it did not come to the UK), where few owners who still have one are willing to part with them. Even the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart does not have one in its collection.





TOP TO BOTTOM
The S123 was not the roomiest estate but easily the poshest; assembly in the Bremen factory in April 1978; interior the same high quality as the saloon model.



But despite these healthy numbers, the S123 was quite rare in the UK, and demand always outstripped supply. After the original owners had finished with them, S123s progressively become the tradesman's hard worked and often abused load carriers, which is why extremely few exist in good order and with low mileage. That they are considerably more expensive to restore than the saloon has also helped ensure that Mercedes' first factory estate is now easily the rarest of all models from its period.

Many of the cars offered by classic car dealers have been sent to us beforehand to be put right. S123s are particularly complex to restore, as all have the hydro-pnuematic self-levelling suspension, parts for which are hard to find – we have to replace the often corroded pipes with 124-series items, as the originals are no longer available. Many parts are punitively expensive, with specialist Mercedes-Benz equipment required to set them up correctly.

At W123 World we receive more calls for the estate than any other 123. For example, recently we had a request for one from a large cycle shop, which wants it to promote the business, as this model was used extensively by famous cycle racing teams, and we also supplied one to an enthusiast in Italy who uses it for classic bicycle races, where only old bikes are used.

Things are changing in that we now have commissions to fully restore 123 estates even when discovered in good order. There is a worldwide demand from prospective owners – many of whom are artists, designers, photographers, architects and the like – who simply want nothing else.

We have a customer in New York who has a film location company, who is currently restoring a fully loaded 280TE, and the work is expected to cost over $50,000 (about £30,000) by the time it is finished. We also found a set of flight case top boxes for him. CM

⇨ *Mark Cosovich runs W123 World Tel 01792 846888 Web www.w123world.com. His new book,* **Mercedes-Benz W123 – the finest saloon car of the 20th Century,** *co-written with Classic Mercedes contributor Martin Buckley, is due to be published soon*



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Today these cars are super rare with a fantasic combination of long wheel base (SEL), a thumping V8 and of course this particular car has the added advantage of regular suspension rather than the complex and eye wateringly expensive to maintain hydraulic or air suspension. Respected journalist Martin Buckley has written an interesting article in the April 2014 edition of Classic & Sportscar praising the virtues of the smaller V8's over the complex 6.9. The issue has an interesting secondary feature on the rise of these S Class Benz.

In 2009 ownership passed to a Mercedes-Benz Club member and prior to that the Saady family have been the only custodians. We absolutely love this car. Long wheel base, V8, Black with Black it looks and sounds totally imposing and draws admiration wherever it's parked or driven. The condition is as good as you see on the photograph having been through our preparation facility here. The car is now ready to show, transport you in comfort (air con) to your house in Europe where it would grace any collection.

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Vintage year

The Frankfurt show of 57 years ago was rich in newly launched Mercedes models. Nick Kisch, with the help of these evocative archive photos, imagines he was there

IMAGES Daimler AG

A confident range of new Mercedes-Benz products at the 1957 Frankfurt motor show, including the sensational 300SL Roadster, amply illustrates the rapid industrial and economic recovery made in West Germany during the dozen years after World War Two. Open tread spiral stairways and crazy paving reflect the modernist influence coming from American architecture, as do open plan spaces, plain surfaces, and bold geometric shapes. All these elements are being used in a great many of the buildings under construction in German cities during the post-war years.

The stylised world map and graphic flags on the far wall highlight the comprehensive, worldwide network of dealers, the Mercedes brand image clearly unbowed by the devastation of war. The slogan below it translates as 'Mercedes-Benz all over the world', this tag line having been used in the in-house magazine as of 1955.

On the right-hand side of the walkway at the far end is a W120 180 Ponton saloon, Mercedes' first monocoque construction car, and the mainstay of the firm's production at the time. No doubt outside this exhibition centre are a sea of beige coloured taxis predominantly of this model, delivering, and waiting to collect show vistors.

The chassis on display is that of the recently launched W180 II 220S Ponton. The Ponton name, incidentally, was coined early on, due to the detachable front subframe cradling the engine and gearbox, a similar arrangement being used on the W105 219 (the pale coloured saloon behind the 300 limousine) and the W180 220a Pontons.

The worldwide influence Detroit is having on styling in the 1950s is reflected in the looks of most of the vehicles on the stand, Mercedes' intention being to increase sales to the lucrative, car-hungry North American market. Apart, that is, from the more conservatively styled Ponton, aimed more squarely at the home market.

The W189 300d Adenauer, launched in 1957, has 100mm added to its length over the previous 300, and while it retains a separate cruciform tubular chassis, a redesign of all the body panels moves towards a more transatlantic look. With a larger, lighter 'glasshouse', the revised limousine's windows can be wound down out of sight, and the rear quarter window removed altogether, to leave a stylish pillarless profile.

The 300's three-litre six-cylinder engine is updated with fuel-injection to compensate for a slight increase in weight. Unfortunately, however, the American influence on styling, although now fashionable, will cause the car to date quite quickly. Its successor, the 1963 600 (see pages 92 to 96), will last the test of time rather better.



Floor plan A separate, slightly raised area with a guard rail to hold back the soon to arrive milling crowds accommodates the more glamorous cabriolets in the range, the 300SL Roadster and 220S. Troughs of potted plants add colour and texture, helping soften the stand's hard edges.





Best equipment Top of the Ponton range is this fully optioned 220S with full-length Webasto sunroof and whitewall tyres. Its front end is a familiar sight in the rear-view mirror in the overtaking lanes of Germany's autobahns. For its last year, 1958, the six-cylinder 220S will receive mechanical fuel-injection and the 220SE title, ahead of the Fintail's launch the following year.



Fashion statement Once the show doors are opened the public pour in, the fashions and dress codes of the day mirroring Germany's optimism and growing affluence. Men mostly prefer slicked back hair, suits and thin ties, while pleated skirts with linear patterns and twinsets are worn by most of the ladies present.



On the roof A white 190SL is the 300SL's more affordable sister, here fitted with the hardtop option which turns it into a neat closed coupe. Two years later, in 1959, the hardtop will be redesigned with a more modern looking wrap around rear screen.



Star of the show Compared to the outgoing 300SL Gullwing, the new 300SL roadster has a re-engineered space-frame to allow cut-outs for conventional doors (although the wide sills remained) and increased boot space. The cigar toting, grey haired gentleman looks very much like a prospective 300SL customer.

★ Headlines of 1957 ★

★ *The Russians launch the first living creature into space, a dog named Laika, in satellite Sputnik II*

★ *The Fiat 500, powered by a 497cc air-cooled engine, is launched, and a fire breaks out at the Jaguar factory in Coventry, gutting hundreds of cars*

★ *Juan Manuel Fangio wins the Formula 1 championship in a Maserati, scoring 40 points, Stirling Moss in a Vanwall finishing second with 25 points*



Opening time

A 124-series cabriolet is the ideal classic for summer motoring, and thanks to its excellent hood and sturdy build, practical enough for winter, too. Here we present everything you need to know if you fancy buying one

IMAGES TERRY OBORNE/DAIMLER AG



Mercedes' 124-series is fondly regarded, but from that range the cabriolet stands out as the most coveted model by far. Prices of the four-seat convertible, added to the line-up in 1992, are significantly above those of the saloon, coupe and estate, not to mention the 208-series CLK cabriolet that replaced it, and it is a model that Mercedes specialists will snap up for stock, knowing there is a good demand for it.

The car exudes glamour, but its appeal as a modern classic is not all to do with looks. It is also appreciated for its 124 attributes of uncomplicated engineering and durability, which make it a straightforward – if not a necessarily cheap – car to maintain and repair. Then there is the spacious ⇨

INSET
Four-cylinder engine in the E220 uninspiring but gives good fuel economy.

BELOW LEFT
These 15-inch alloys graced the E220/E320, the E36 AMG having 17s.

BELOW
The stiffer Sportline suspension was standard on the E320 and E36.

BELOW RIGHT
A mileage under 100,000 boosts an A124's value by a significant amount.







"CABRIOLETS HAVE SURVIVED WELL, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE AS AN EXPENSIVE INDULGENCE THE MAJORITY HAVE LED COSSETED, LOW-MILEAGE LIVES"



Electric seat adjustment, with or without memory, was an optional extra.



Handsome yet understated and well made interior is a high point of the A124.

What goes wrong

The hood

Make sure you check the condition of an A124's hood, as Mercedes-Benz charges over £1,900 for the fabric alone, while specialist trimmers supply and fit for £1,000 to £1,200. Apart from any rips or tears, a common wear point on the roof is aft of the rear side window, where the canvas folds. "I've never had a problem with the hood motor, but now and again the catch that holds down the hood at the rear fails, and that's a £200 job," says Jonathan Aucott of Mercedes-Benz specialist Avantgarde (07968 694448, www.avantgardecars.co.uk). "You will hear a beep when you're driving."

Bodywork

One thing that is highly likely as mileage builds is rust on the bottom of the front wings, and although not affecting the car's overall structure, it looks dreadful. "The best cure is the most expensive," warns Aucott. "You're looking at £800 a side to do them properly. You can use non-genuine Mercedes-Benz wings, but they don't tend to fit well, and will actually increase bodyshop costs." Other known A124 rust traps are the front and rear jacking points (which themselves are a good litmus of the general state of corrosion on the car), the boot floor, the spar in the engine bay between the headlamps, and around the base of the electric aerial on the rear wing.

Engine mounts

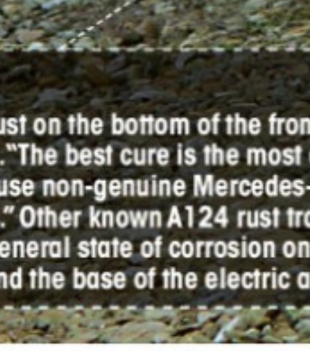
Mercedes models of this era used hydraulic engine mounts, which after a while wear out, allowing the engine to drop slightly, and in extreme cases rest on the chassis member. A clunking on full steering lock is the symptom, but the cure is not prohibitively expensive at £350-£400, and well worth the money because new mounts make the car so much smoother.

⇨ accommodation, and the tough, three-layer hood that all but gives it the refinement of the 124-series coupe. And on safety the A124 ('A' being the prefix for cabriolets) impresses, its raisable rear headrests part of an elaborate pop-up, roll-over protection system that is activated by a series of suspension sensors.

Even though production ceased 18 years ago, the cabriolets have survived well, presumably because as an expensive indulgence – they cost at least £40,000 by the end of production – the majority have led cosseted, low-mileage lives. "It's extraordinary that even after all this time immaculate, low-mileage cabriolets keep on turning up," says Michael Lavers of classic Mercedes specialist Silver Arrows Automobiles in London.

Telltale signs of trouble

- Look for hood wear at the rear pillars
- Hood fabric can become discoloured
- Cylinder head gasket leaks on E320 engine
- Earlier E320s can suffer idle-control valve failure, an MOT failure
- E320 wiring loom on top of engine deteriorates due to heat, and pricey to replace
- Rust on the front wings, behind body-side claddings, and on the front/rear jacking points
- Worn engine mounts cause vibration and may clunk when steering is on full lock



A total of 789 E220s were imported to the UK, about two thirds of A124 sales.

Model evolution

At first a sole model, the six-cylinder, three-litre 300CE-24 Cabriolet was built, but by the time the A124 came to the UK in 1993 this had evolved into the E320 Cabriolet with an improved hood and using a new 3.2-litre version of the M104 24-valve engine with the same 217bhp, but 17 per cent more torque at 229lb ft. The E320 was distinguished by the general 124 facelift, which most notably saw the Mercedes star moved from the grille to the bonnet, and also bumpers wholly rather than partially colour-keyed to the bodywork. However, a small number of pre-facelift cars were fitted with the new engine and badged 320CE, and some did come to Britain. The E320 was partnered by the E220 using Stuttgart's multi-valve, 2.2-litre, four-cylinder, 148bhp engine (the base model two-litre, 134bhp E200 Cabriolet was not sold here).

Engines

Mechanically the E220 is a safer bet than the E320, with the only known engine issue being the cylinder head gasket. "The gasket deteriorates and you can see water leaking out of one side and oil from the other side," says John Williams of Prestige Motor Company (01295 250222, www.prestigemotorcompany.co.uk). The E320 engine is well known for its head gasket leaking at the rear, although the result is usually a dribbling of oil down the side of the engine rather than a loss of performance. But if it has not already done so, the engine will almost certainly fry its wiring loom, which passes through the top of the cylinder head. "If you're lucky, and it has just gone hard at the ends, you can get away with the repair kit, but if it has gone hard all the way back it will need to be renewed," Williams advises. The E36 AMG does not suffer any additional problems.

Transmission

An E320-only problem is the five-speed automatic gearbox, which although making the car more responsive and a better cruiser (four-speed cars feel low geared and slower changing) is widely regarded as being more troublesome at higher mileage. "It's prone to losing its gears, usually third due to hydraulic problems," says Williams. "It will cost £1,200 to £1,500 to rebuild it, whereas the four-speed can be done for around £800."

Engine management

E320s built until about 1994, fitted with Bosch KE-Jetronic fuel injection, can suffer a faulty idle control valve, which will affect not only the idling speed, but the emissions, too, leading to an MOT failure. New, this part costs around £1,500, but 124-series specialists such as MercDoctors (07771 966977, www.mercdoctors.co.uk) can offer a cheaper cure, either by cleaning out the unit or sourcing a suitable secondhand one.



Six-cylinder shown here is sweet, but the E320 costs more to run than the E220.





Milestones

September 1991
300 CE-24 Cabriolet announced, Mercedes' first four-seat convertible for 20 years

March 1992
300 CE-24 Cabriolet goes on sale

September 1992
300 CE-24 replaced by 320CE Cabriolet

June 1993
New grille, in line with general 124-series facelift, and 320CE rebadged E320; E220 joins the range

September 1993
E36 AMG Cabriolet introduced

July 1997
All A124 production ceases



The E220 and E320 had a four-speed automatic as standard. However, the four-cylinder E220 could be ordered at the same price with a five-speed manual, the same applying to the E320 except that in its case the gearbox was a close-ratio unit, while the E320 was the only A124 model available with the then new, cost option five-speed automatic.

There was no further evolution of the A124, other than the September 1993 launch of the 268bhp E36 AMG, with its 17-inch wheels and bodykit.

How it drives

The A124's hood is lowered by releasing two catches at the top of the windscreen, then pushing the hood up a couple of inches, after which a red button on the centre console engages the motor. You might think the whole operation – which sees a rear flap lift up to swallow the hood, and then at the end the windows are raised – feels bumpy and noisy, but all A124s are like this. Lowering the hood, incidentally, will be a good test of the car's battery.

With the decapitated coupe body substantially strengthened for the cabriolet, there should be minimal scuttle shake as you drive over rough surfaces, and with the hood raised noise levels should be low, with no wind whistles. Obviously you cannot test the crash safety, but ensure the two rear 'tombstone' headrests rise and lower using the button on the fascia. The E220 and E320 engines are like chalk and cheese. The six-cylinder is sweetness itself, while the four-cylinder engine sounds dull and is rough when revved, but it can give 30mpg rather than 20mpg. The E36 AMG does have a performance edge over the E320, but the margin is not huge and it feels less refined. The six-cylinder cars ride more firmly than the coupes, owing to the standard-fit Sportline ⇨

"THE SIX-CYLINDER IS SWEETNESS ITSELF, WHILE THE FOUR-CYLINDER ENGINE SOUNDS DULL AND IS ROUGH WHEN REVVED, BUT IT CAN GIVE 30MPG RATHER THAN 20MPG"

TOP
For the first two years the star badge was mounted on the top of the grille.

ABOVE
The repositioned badge is the main way to tell if a car is a facelift model.

ABOVE RIGHT
Cruise control, an extra on the E220 and E320 is simple but works well.



320CE was mechanically identical to the E320 that replaced it in June 1993.



This was the original A124, the three-litre 300CE-24 of 1992, not sold in Britain.

Specifications/ years sold in the UK

E220 (M111 2,199cc 4-cyl, 148bhp) 1993-1997
320CE (M104 3,199cc 6-cyl, 217bhp) 1992-1993
E320 (M104 3,199cc 6-cyl, 217bhp) 1993-1997
E36 AMG (M104 3,604cc 6-cyl, 268bhp) 1993-1997

NOT OFFICIALLY IMPORTED TO UK
E200 (M111 1,998cc 4-cyl, 134bhp) 1993-1997
300CE-24 (M104 2,960cc 6-cyl, 217bhp) 1992-1993




Jacking points are an important indicator of how must rust the bodywork has suffered – these are in excellent shape.


A Mercedes without air-conditioning? It did happen back in the 90s, this car not delivered with the £2,000 option.

⇨ suspension (an option on the E220). The recirculating-ball steering is no less lifeless, though, even with the slightly smaller steering wheel that some cars will have as part of the optional Sportline equipment pack.

Verdict

The cabriolet has by far the highest values of the 124-series range, but we think it is worth every penny, whether it is a low-spec E220 with cloth trim, a fully loaded E320 or one of the super rare E36 AMGs, only 14 of which were officially imported to the UK. The car has classic appeal yet is modern enough to use as everyday transport, especially with its proper rear seats, and it is robust and reliable, with the added bonus that all the key parts are still freely available. Despite the A124's comparative rarity (33,952 made, compared to 141,498 coupes) there is a good choice of well-preserved examples and the feeling among specialists is that prices have probably come close to bottoming out, if they have not already done so. It really could be a case of getting one while you can at an affordable price. CM

What an A124 will cost you

Prices of A124s softened somewhat during the recession, but anyone seeking a cheap convertible should look elsewhere. Cabriolets start at around £6,000, however that is for the poor examples. Decent ones are always in demand, particularly in the summer months, and broadly speaking tend to be bought by people who look after them and spend what is necessary.

Average condition cars requiring no serious work sell for £7,000 to £9,000, while the best low-mileage examples – under 50,000 miles – top out at £15,000 to £16,000. Mileage under 100,000 also helps values. A really immaculate E36 AMG Cabriolet could make around £25,000.

As you would expect, E320 Cabriolets have a higher standard equipment level than the E220 Cabriolets, including metallic paint, headlamp wash-wipe and a front centre armrest, and they also tend to have had more options fitted. But there is now a smaller gap between E220 and E320 values than there once was – perhaps with higher fuel prices, more people are happy with a E220, and are also now more likely to buy on condition, not engine size.

Price range

£6,000-£7,000 1993/1994 low spec E220, rusty front wings
£7,000-£9,000 E220/E320, all years, mileage 100K or over
£9,000-12,000 1996-1997, sub-100K miles E220/E320 with leather and air
£12,000-£15,000 High-spec E220/E320 with no rust, full history, under 75K miles. Also E36 AMG
£15,000-£20,000 Show condition cars, under 15K miles
£20,000-£25,000 The handful of cars in as new condition

Typical service/maintenance costs (E220/E320*)

A service **£175**
B service **£446/500**
Gearbox service, fuel filter (36,000 miles) **£220**
Front anti-roll bar bushes **£126**
Front brake discs and pads **£270**
Engine mounts **£370**
Replacement hood (fitted, independent brand) **£960**

*Service/parts prices from Klasse of Fulham (0207 385 4156, www.klasse-of-fulham.co.uk), and hood price from d-class Automotive (01483 722923, www.dclass.co.uk). *All include VAT*

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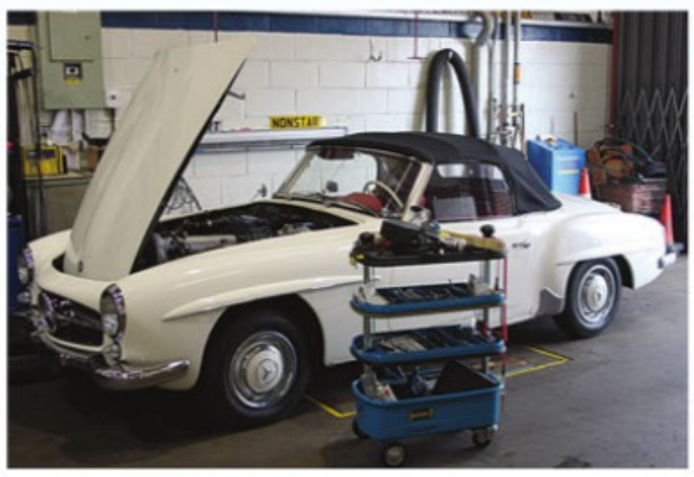
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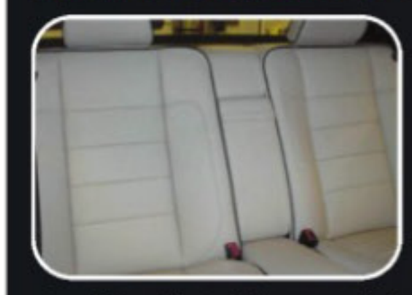


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RED ROUTE

For **David Sutherland**, the E320 really is the way to go, even if he spends more time fussing over it than he does driving the sweet 3.2-litre coupe

IMAGES David Sutherland

Owner's file

CAR C124 E320 Coupe
DATE Registered February 1996
PURCHASED January 2013
MILEAGE 91,650
OWNER David Sutherland
LIVES London
UPDATES Driver's door hinge adjusted for better opening and closing, non-functioning remote key fixed, battery replaced – and a paintwork disaster narrowly avoided

I think my E320 Coupe is in very good all-round condition, but since it last appeared in the magazine, in the Autumn 2013 edition, I have embarked upon an almost obsessive mission to fix anything that is not quite right. Indeed, I may have spent more time on this than actually driving the car, partly because of the long and wet winter – although it's not a convertible, I do think of the E320 as a summer car, because I most enjoy being in it when I can have all the windows down.

It started with a visit to the local Mercedes specialist I have come to know so well over the last eight years, Klasse of Fulham, so that the driver's door, which was not shutting properly could be looked at. It ought to swing gently shut, but had to be slammed.

It's a question of adjustment, but you have to know what you are doing, especially because of the lack of full-height B-pillars, and proprietor Steve Shali, a leading expert on the 124-series, got to work. First the door hinge has to be set correctly, but after that the glass will not be in exactly the right position – and even the tiniest misalignment can cause wind noise, and not allow the door to shut cleanly. So the door trim had to come off for the window to be adjusted. Finally, the position of door striker plate on the bodyworkhad to be adjusted. It's a fiddly job, but now the shutting action



"I THINK OF THE E320 AS A SUMMER CAR, BECAUSE I MOST ENJOY BEING IN IT WHEN I CAN HAVE ALL THE WINDOWS DOWN"

ABOVE
Cabin is comfortable and smart, and even better with all windows dropped.







LEFT
Steve Shali, boss of Klasse of Fulham, sorted the ill shutting driver's door.

FAR LEFT
The badge signifies that this C124 has six, not four cylinders under its bonnet.

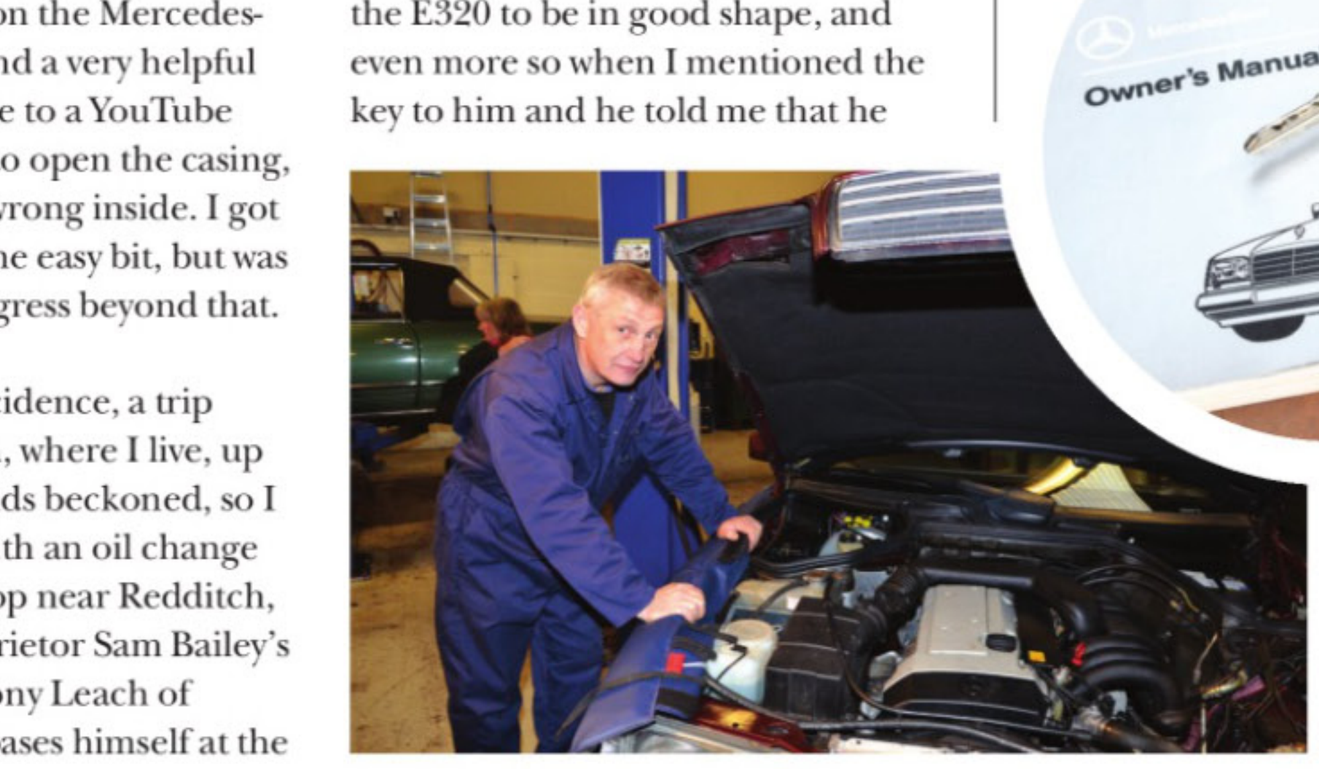
FAR BOTTOM LEFT
Seeing the three-pointed star from the driver's seat gives you a lovely feeling.

of the long door is much improved.

The next point to address was one of the two remote keys, both original factory items, that had come with the car. One worked, the other was dead, and after discovering that a replacement from Mercedes would cost around £200, I sought to have it repaired. I posted a question on how this might be done on the Mercedes-Benz Club forum, and a very helpful member directed me to a YouTube video showing how to open the casing, and what might be wrong inside. I got it open, which was the easy bit, but was unable to make progress beyond that.

By happy coincidence, a trip from London, where I live, up to the Midlands beckoned, so I decided to time it with an oil change service at the SL Shop near Redditch, and to take up proprietor Sam Bailey's invitation to have Tony Leach of MercDoctors, who bases himself at the SL Shop once a week, give the car the once-over. MercDoctors specialises in Mercedes engine management and electrics from the Pagoda to the end of the R129 era in 2001, so I just knew Tony would be a useful bloke to know.

I was pleased when, after applying a flash code reader to the various electronic modules, he pronounced the E320 to be in good shape, and even more so when I mentioned the key to him and he told me that he could fix it. A few days later I posted it to him and he diagnosed a fairly common fault in keys like this – one of the ultra-fine wires to the key button had become disconnected, due to the constant pressing action on the button over the years. It's such a small wire that reconnecting takes an expert's skill, so at £42 the repair is excellent value compared to the cost of a new key. Incidentally, to find out if an infra-red key of this type is transmitting a signal, hold it up to a digital camera or iPhone and press the button – if it is, you will see a glow on the camera lens, even though it can't be seen with the naked eye.



BELOW
MercDoctors' Tony Leach gave the electrics on the E320 a thorough check.

INSET
He also managed to fix the key which saved the owner over £150.

An unexpected lesson in paint care followed, thanks to a leak in my garage roof during sustained rain. Water seeped through on to the E320's bootlid, which would normally be harmess, but by the time I saw it a week or more later the limescale in the water had formed into nasty brown patches on the crimson metallic paintwork. Unwittingly, I did exactly what I shouldn't have, and, employing serious and sustained elbow grease, applied a paint restorer to the affected areas – which took some of if off, but polished the rest into shiny, hardened lumps.

As I slowly realised that the paint's newly acquired imperfections – probably barely perceptible to anyone else, but horribly obvious to me – might be permanent, my heart sank. I keep my pride and joy safely in a garage, and this is the result!

It had become, as they say, a job for the professionals, with Greg Spink of ValetPRO called in to sort out the partly self-inflicted mess. His solution seemed alarming – apply his firm's wheel cleaner, Blue Gel Wheel Cleaner. "The easiest way is to use an acid, it's almost like de-scaling your kettle," he explained. "The acid dissolves the deposits, and because it works in a short space and is washed off in time it doesn't affect the lacquer which protects the paint."

He then buffed the wider area of the bootlid to blend it in. Some very small traces of the solidified limescale remain, but Greg advised against attempting to remove them lest the paint surface become ⇨

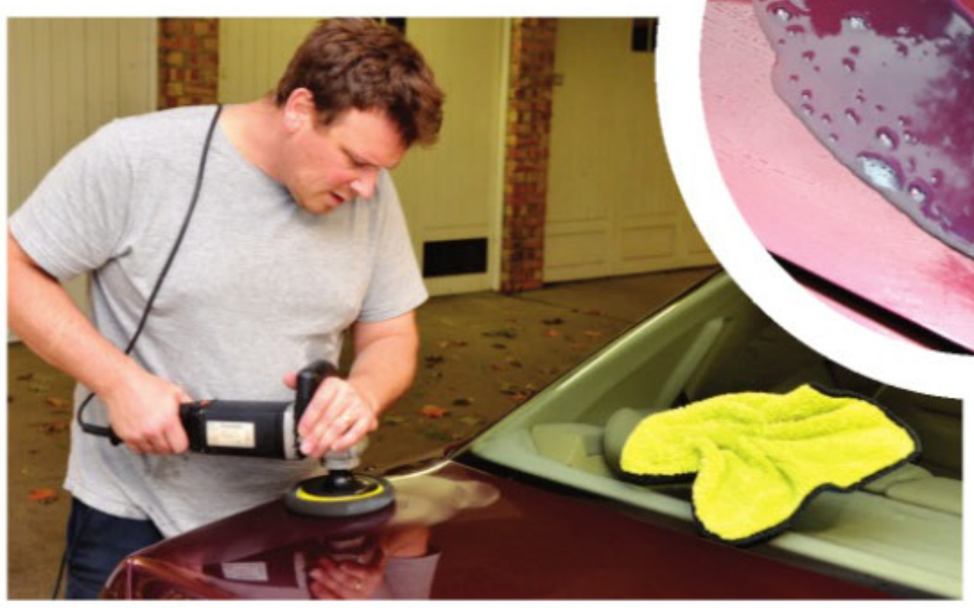
⇨ broken, which would be much worse. I learned the hard way the folly of leaving dirty water lying for too long – but at least the leak in my garage roof is now fixed.

One sign that winter has arrived is when a car's battery loses power, and right on cue, on one November morning last year I got into the E320, turned the key, and for a moment the starter groaned pathetically before reverting to its usual mode. The engine started, but even though I possess a box full of battery chargers collected over the years, I have absolutely no time for duff batteries. As soon as they play up, replace them, I say – you will avoid being stranded later on, and a fresh battery certainly makes me feel more secure in a car, especially an old one. As I wasn't in a rush, I diverted via Mercedes-Benz Chelsea for a new one.

According to the chassis number, I had the choice of either a heavy-duty or a 'normal' unit, so I took the latter. The price was £77.50, and as always at a car dealer's parts department I asked for a discount and was told there was one for Mercedes-Benz Club members. Not only am I a member but also I had my membership card in my wallet, so saved just over £10. Another three purchases like this and the membership fee will have paid for itself!



The 3.2-litre straight-six is, the owner feels, nicer than the V6 that replaced it, even if the old M104's economy is inferior.



INSET
Car care expert Greg Spink of ValetPRO took out unslightly bootlid stains.

BELOW
Wheel cleaner is the best stuff for the job – but apply with care.



The next things I need to pay attention to are the wheels. When I bought the E320, its wheels had a fantastic, high-polish finish, but this doesn't wear well unless you clean them regularly – which I don't. I may have them lacquered, but what would hold the car up when they are away? Maybe a set of the 15-hole wheels, which were optional during my E320's time, if I can find a set. CM

⇨ *Thanks to Klasse of Fulham Tel 0207 385 4156 Web www.klasse-of-fulham.co.uk, MercDoctors Web www.mercdoctors.co.uk ValetPro Tel 01892 277001 Web www.valetpro.co.uk*

"ONE NOVEMBER MORNING LAST YEAR I GOT INTO THE E320, TURNED THE KEY, AND FOR A MOMENT THE STARTER GROANED PATHETICALLY"



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CLUB NEWS

REPORTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD ON CLUB MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES





Corvette that showed up was adapted to suit.

Open day

Top Down Tour attracted a varied turn-out – including an AWOL Corvette

A Vietnam veteran driving a Corvette arrived at the Mercedes-Benz Club Auckland's Top Down Tour held in Auckland, New Zealand, in early March, and to facilitate his inclusion organisers stuck a Mercedes insignia made out of cardboard over his Chevy's badge, *writes Alison Lambden*. He and his wife Barb won't be forgotten in a hurry.

Nor will Ken Williams, who showed off a lovely red 1958 220S Ponton Cabriolet that he recently acquired. He and his wife Noeline were not only envied for their new car, but also for their designer dog who, riding on the driver's lap, appeared to want to take over the driving!

The Top Down Tour attracted 42 members, with 18 of the 22 cars convertibles. Setting off from New Lynn, classics dominated, with a strong representation from the 1960s and 1970s, and youngtimers from the 1990s. The tour wove through scenic Titirangi and the Waitakere Ranges to the Mount Pukematekeo lookout above the Waitakere Dam, then downhill via Bethells Road and Taupaki, following the Riverhead Ridge to Helensville, and out to South Head.

Equal placed winners of the three-page Tour quiz were Chris Haliday and Angelique de Jong, Brian and Lynn Hood, and Jack and Marilyn Nazer, each pair taking home a bottle of wine for their ability to drive, navigate and answer a sheet of questions pertaining to features along the route. The toughest one was, surely: "If you caught the daily limit of snapper, gurnard and scallops and laid them end to end, what would be the minimum length?" Answer: 9.7 metres.

Lone star SLs

Space squeezed it out of the last *Classic Mercedes*, but we thought it worth including that Texas Hill Country section members of The Mercedes-Benz club enjoyed a most satisfactory Oktoberfest celebration at the San Antonio, Texas, home of section president Bob Holbrook.

The event began at noon on a Saturday in late October, attracting 40 members, *writes Kathie Steele*. The spotlight was on SLs, with nine welcomed, ranging from 1969 to 2011. Music was by an ensemble of the Boerne Village Band, playing traditional German waltzes and polkas during lunch, and led by club member Gary Joiner.

Members voted by ballot for first, second and third places, and also 'People's Choice Winner', for both the SL class and other Mercedes. The first and second places in the SL class were Mark Schwarz with his 280SL, and Abram Bueche's 560SL, while People's Choice Winner was Bob Holbrook's 1950 170S.


Notable music as well as smart cars at Oktoberfest.

Member's dream car


Alessandro Muscinelli/Greg Lokes

Many classic car enthusiasts have an ongoing project in their garage, but Mercedes-Benz Owners' member Alessandro Muscinelli has taken it further than most – by going into business building fully running replicas of Mercedes' all-conquering 300SLR sports car racer of the 1950s. Two years ago, two brothers living on Lago Maggiore, north of Turin in Italy, decided to create a classic race car rather than restore classic road cars, and worked from such drawings and photographs as they could get hold of.

That was when Muscinelli entered the frame. "I owned an E-Type Jaguar which had suffered a crash four years ago," he says. "I took it to be repaired, and got to know the workers who built the '300SLR'." He then arranged for the car to be displayed at the Autosport International Motorsport show in early 2014.


Building a replica 300SLR was not the easiest project, but worked out well.

The original three-litre M196 engine obviously being unavailable, the car uses a 1970s' M110 280SE engine, which gives the lightweight sports car, just 800kg, ample performance. Other parts that could not be sourced were made from scratch, such as the steering wheel, the gearbox casing and the gearchange gate.

SLK has its day

The original R170 SLK roadster, introduced in 1996, is seen by some as a definite up-and-coming young classic, and its status as such has been underlined by The Mercedes-Benz Club holding its first ever SLK Day, which will be on Sunday, June 22, at Mercedes-Benz World at Brooklands in Surrey.

"In the past, SLKs have shared space with their larger SL cousins at the club's long-running SL Day, but with the growing popularity of SLKs among members, they are to have a day of their own," the club said. A show and shine competition will be held, and experts from the club's technical team will be on hand to answer club members' questions.



The SLK deserves its own event, The M-B Club feels.



There is only one photo you take in front of a World War Two bomber, isn't there?

Flight club tour

Twenty-five members of the Pikes Peak Section of the Mercedes-Benz Club of America started the 2014 season in January by travelling to the National Museum of World War Two Aviation in Colorado Springs, *writes Gary Gagnon*. During the two-hour tour of the newest aviation museum in the country, the section members were treated to an informative and entertaining tour led by a knowledgeable museum volunteer.

The session began in a recreated World War Two-style Quonset hut with an elevated stage and map of Europe. Display areas encompassing historical exhibits and various aircraft in different stages of restoration were toured, and visitors saw flying examples of the P-47 Thunderbolt, B-25 Mitchell (pictured), Avenger Torpedo Bomber, and a Corsair fighter.

CLUB LIFE

Garry Boyce
Mercedes-Benz Club Auckland

His car collection, and his work on behalf of members, impresses

Garry Boyce was born in Rangiora in New Zealand in 1946, and on leaving school he began his apprenticeship as a fitter and turner. He later ran his own importing and distribution company, selling it in 2008.

It wasn't until 1988 that Garry bought his first Mercedes, a 190E 2.6, followed in 1994 by an E320 Coupe. In the same year he acquired a 1964 220 SEb Coupe, then four years later his first SL, a 1957 190SL – but could not afford the 300SL Gullwing he coveted.

This out of his reach, Garry concentrated on the next best thing, a 300SL Roadster. In 2001, he bought a very tired 1957 300SL Roadster in the Netherlands, and imported it in pieces to New Zealand in 2003 as a container load "of cardboard boxes of junk", according to his wife, Alison. The restoration project took five years, and he now describes the car as "drop-dead gorgeous, scrumptious!"

In 2003, he found an alloy-bodied Gullwing and a Roadster in New Zealand, both in a poor state, and in 2007 purchased both, restoring them at the same time to achieve some synergy.

Garry's absolute passion is for cars in concours condition, and he has visited every major event worldwide, including, of course, New Zealand's own Intermarque Concours, Garry having been on the committee for eight years, and chairman for four.

This work brings useful funds to the Mercedes-Benz Auckland Club. He is currently vice-president of the Mercedes-Benz Auckland Club and previously was president for four years. A man committed to the marque.



Garry has been restoring Mercs and helping club menbers for many years.

Please send your club news and photos to info@classicmercedesmagazine.com

In brief



Fresh face at MBCA

The Mercedes-Benz Club of America has a new national president, 1987 116-series 300SDL-owning Terry Kiwala. His priority is "to instill a financial rigor such that the club is well positioned to be a profitable entity over the long term."

New dates for Italian summer

The organisers of the Summer Marathon, which covers almost 400 miles through Italy, including time trials, from June 12 to 15, have stretched the normal 1978 cut-off date for cars to 1981 for certain marques, including Mercedes-Benz. Visit www.summermarathon.it for more details.

The Regional news

This Mercedes-Benz Club UK has a new Regional Officer, 'Midlands – North East', while Graham Saxton takes up the same role in 'Surrey and Thames Valley'. 'Anglia – North' has an additional RO, Roger Hinton.

The wrong number

In the 'World Classics' story in the Spring 2014 issue we referred to Eric Richardson's W108, on display at Mercedes-Benz World, as a 250SE. In fact, it is a 280SE. Apologies.





LEFT
A massiver amount of cooling is needed to keep the V8 from overheating.

BOTTOM LEFT
This cleverly designed windshield prevents wind ruffling rear passengers.

"THE W100 600 'GROSSER' PACKED IN SUFFICIENT TECHNOLOGY TO REDEFINE THE LIMOUSINE, INCLUDING MERCEDES' FIRST V8"

STATELY PROGRESS

Over its long production run the 600 was unchanged over the 1963 original, yet even when it finally bowed out it seemed like an engineering masterpiece, **David Sutherland** suggests

IMAGES Jim Maxwell



It was one of the longest running Mercedes models, unveiled in 1963 and built for nearly 18 years, and yet one of the smallest in volume with just 2,677 delivered. But one aspect of the W100 600 is immeasurable – the sheer, lasting gravitas and prestige that it added to the Mercedes-Benz brand.

Launched in succession to the grand but stodgy 300 Adenauer, which was by then 12 years old, the W100 600 'Grosser' packed in sufficient technology to redefine the limousine, including Mercedes' first V8, and a complex hydraulics system importing know how from the Daimler-Benz aero-engine division. Its looks were revolutionary, too, eschewing the traditional limousine's pronounced but staid curves for a bang up-to-date angular look, which, thanks to its perfectly proportioned simplicity from all angles, still stuns today.

Indeed, many of the 487 stretched wheelbase Pullman models built, and sold mainly to governments around the world, are still in use, since in 50 years there has never been anything that could claim truly to replace the W100. Many such cars have undergone a full restoration at the Stuttgart W100 specialist Kienle, at a cost easily exceeding the price of a new limousine.



Cans of hydraulic fluid were a useful thing to carry in a 600's boot .

The Midnight Blue car seen here is the 'basic', short-wheelbase model, accounting for the lion's share of production, and part of the permanent display at the Stuttgart-owned Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Irvine, California. Built in 1972, the 600 was in service at the German embassy in Paris, as transport for the ambassador of the time, Sigismund von Braun, and then for Axel Herbst who held the same office from 1976 until 1983.

The 600 is 5,540mm in length, just over 400mm longer than the latest, standard-wheelbase S-Class. Throughout production its engine remained unchanged, a 6.3-litre V8 producing 247bhp and 369lb ft of torque. This single overhead camshaft-per-bank engine was also used in the W109 saloon, for the 300SEL 6.3 model, and only two other Mercedes production engines have surpassed its cubic capacity: the dry-sumped 6.9-litre V8 in the mid 1970s 450SEL 6.9, and the 7.3-litre V12 in the late 1990s R129 SL73 AMG.

For its time the M100 V8 was a magnificent unit, but the most impressive technical aspect of the 600 has to be the maze of hydraulic pipes that powers almost everything that moves. When operating the windows or the seat adjustment, the expected noise of electric motors is replaced by silence. And speed, too. The windows fall rapidly, but rise at a variable speed depending on how much pressure is applied to the button, while the seat bobs up and down quickly when the knob at the side of the seat is moved.

The doors close automatically, once on the first stage of the latch, and a hydraulic control allows the air conditioning to be regulated by a single switch on the fascia. It is the hydraulic system that often forms a high proportion of a 600 refurbishment bill, as most of the parts are extremely expensive and if, as is common, a 600 is unused for a long time the seals will dry out and degrade, causing leaks. And a lack of hydraulic pressure within is a disaster, beaching a 600 totally.

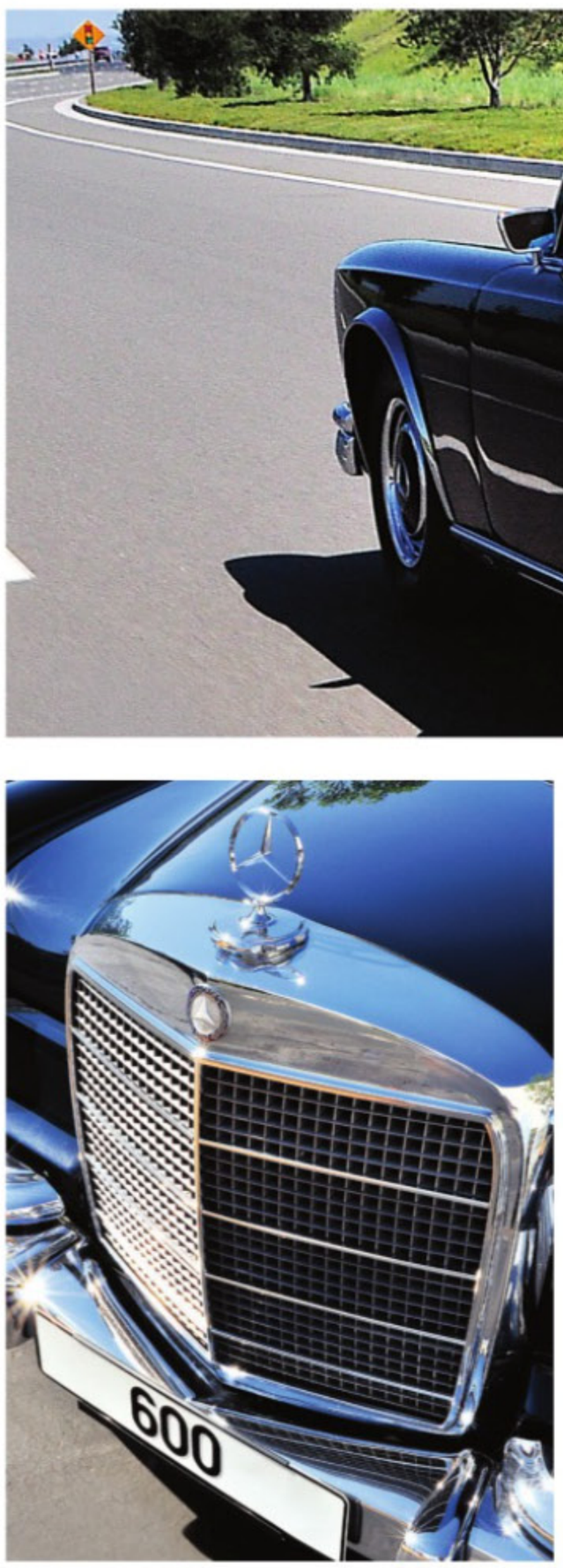
Indeed, even during its time the hydraulics were a headache waiting to happen – to the point that Mercedes equipped its roving engineers with an emergency repair to revive stricken 600s in far-off locations where no dealer networks existed. This included delightfully basic items such as wooden wedges to lock the windows in the 'up' position, and spacers to prevent the front seats sagging.

One of the many other things the











LEFT
Vertical stacked lights an iconic Benz styling feature of the 1960s.

RIGHT
For all its grandeur, the W100's cabin was quite plainly trimmed.

LEFT
Slim C-posts do not afford much privacy, thus curtains fitted.

BOTTOM LEFT
Over 50 years on, the 600's grille still has enormous presence.

BOTTOM RIGHT
The wood used for the top of the fascia has a really lovely grain.

Specifications



Mercedes-Benz 600 (W100)

Engine **M100 6,332cc V8** Power **247bhp@4,000rpm**
Torque **369lb ft@2,800rpm** Transmission **4-speed automatic**
Weight **2,475kg** 0-62mph **9.7sec**
Top speed **128mph*** Fuel consumption **19.9mpg**
Number built **2,190** Years produced **1964-1981**
All figures from Mercedes-Benz





"BUILT IN 1972, THE 600 WAS IN SERVICE AT THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN PARIS, AS TRANSPORT FOR THE AMBASSADOR"



W100 was famous for was the bespoke nature of the interior, the options list so extensive that even a kitchen sink might not be ruled out. This, plus the wide range of interior trim possibilities, makes it likely that no two 600s are exactly the same. But the lavish interiors tended to be reserved for the Pullmans and the canvas-topped landaulets, and this 600 feels quite austere when you slide behind the huge, thin-rimmed steering wheel. The seats are trimmed in Cognac leather, but at first glance could be mistaken for the MB-Tex vinyl, and the fascia is uncrowded for a car with so much equipment.

The overall plainness of design seems only to emphasise the 600's understated quality. On closer inspection, however, you are aware of some exquisite detailing, such as the chrome-plated window switches, and the cleverly integrated wind deflectors built in to the rear doors to allow rear occupants to ride with windows open, but their hairstyles unaffected.

Modern upscale Mercedes have reverted to the steering column mounted gear selector, but prior to this the last model to use it was the 600. And not the small, almost switch-like stalk of today, but a full-sized lever protruding from the column and one which you grip firmly in the hand to govern the four-speed automatic gearbox, with the settings shown in a row in the rev counter. When moved into Drive, the lever also deactivates the foot-operated parking brake.

At tickover the engine is uneven and burbly, as V8s, particularly from American car makers, used to be, but at a brush of the throttle it smoothes out, and the 2.5-tonne car whooshes forward, the wave of power and torque delivered smoothly through the transmission. In the mid-1960s, when a car that could top 100mph was considered to be in a special league, the 600's maximum of nearly 130mph was breathtaking, and although back then 0-62mph or 0-100km/h (62mph) times were less obsessively studied than they would be in later years, a luxury car cracking the latter in under 10 seconds was another hallmark of the 600's technical superiority.

Over 50 years on, the Mercedes feels brisk rather than outright quick. But the V8 and automatic transmission are still impressively refined, and with hindsight one cannot help feeling ⇨







⇨ that Mercedes missed a trick by not applying this magnificent, advanced powertrain to other models of the day, one ideal deserving candidate surely being the 1960s W111 coupe.

The ride set-up that Mercedes decided on is interesting. The air suspension, a system shared with the top-of-the-range Fintail 300SE, could have provided the same soft, magic carpet ride experienced in, say, the similarly suspended Citroën DS, but the 600 actually feels quite firm, and although capable of soaking up road bumps impressively allows a degree of communication from the road that would never have been present in a contemporary luxury car. The steering is, of course, Mercedes' classic recirculating-ball system that is traditionally economical on feel but shock-free over broken surfaces.

ABOVE LEFT
Wheels are 15-inch steel with hub caps – sporty alloys not thought right.

INSET
Seight height adjustment is hydraulic, controlled by a button on the seat's side.

"THE ROOF LINE DOES NOT LOOK HIGH, BUT THE ABSENCE OF CURVES AT THE C-PILLAR ALLOWS ENOUGH HEADROOM TO ACCOMMODATE HATTED OCCUPANTS"

Supplied with the short-wheelbase 600, the ambassadors would not enjoy the yacht-like expanse of cabin space that the Pullman provided, but the rear seat is still a highly agreeable place to be. The roof line does not look high, but the absence of curves at the C-pillar allows enough headroom to accommodate hatted occupants, and while the large rear windscreen and slim rear body pillars do nothing for privacy, side and rear curtains can deter the inquisitive, and, from the outside, even manage to be an attractive design detail when folded back out of use.

The passing of half a century has not diminished the status of Mercedes' most adventurous, memorable and charismatic luxury car in post-war years. That it would be a hard act to follow was highlighted as recently as 2011 when, after a nine-year build run and low sales, Mercedes announced that production of its Maybach limousine would end. CM

1963-1981: 18 years of progress

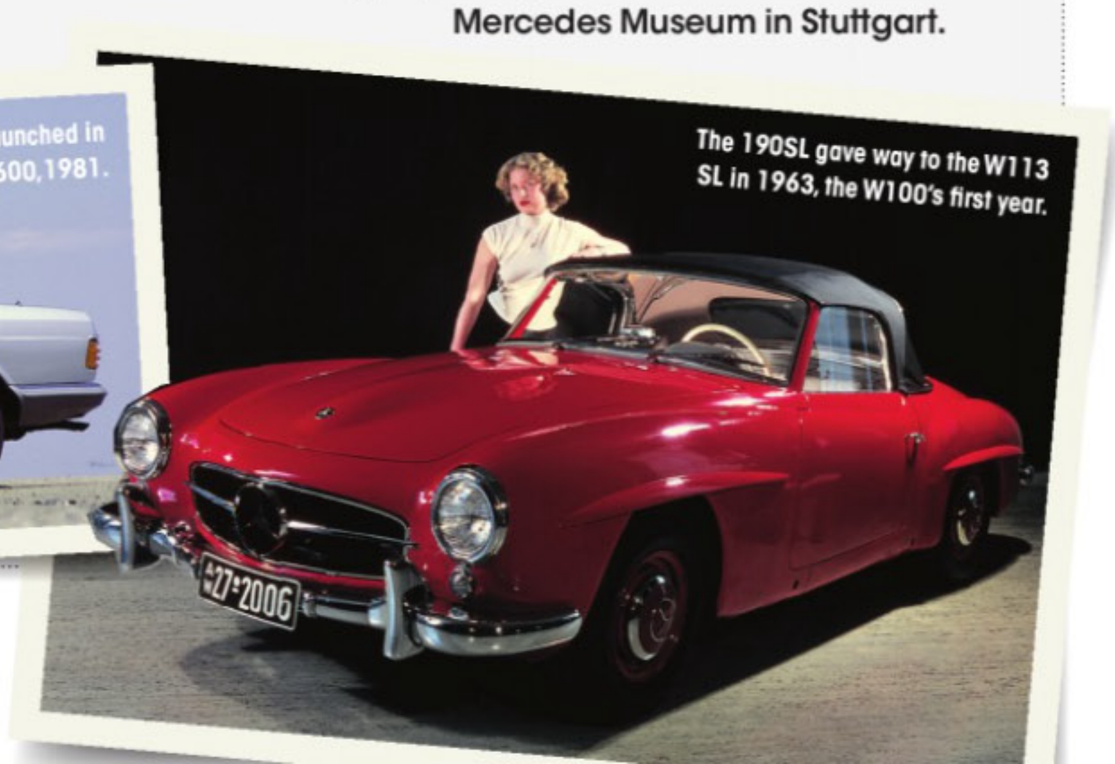
The W100 did not change in that time, but its maker did, its models going from traditional to modern

Mercedes-Benz entered 1963 having built its one millionth post-war car, a Fintail 220SE, a few months earlier, and until March was turning out the last of the W121 190SL and W198 300SL Roadsters, these replaced by the W113 SL, which together with the W100 made it a vintage year for launches. Eugen Böhringer (who died in 2013, aged 91) underlined the new roadster's capabilities by driving a 'Pagoda' to victory in the Liège–Sofia–Liège rally.

By 1972, the year in which the Classic Center's W100 was delivered, the W113 had been replaced by the heavier and more powerful R107 SL, which spawned a coupe version, the SLC. In the autumn the 116-series S-Class was introduced, and with the W114/115 saloon on sale since 1968 there was now a greater distinction between Mercedes' top-line cars and those at the lower end of the price scale.

By the last year of W100 production, 1981, Mercedes was the undisputed leader in car safety, introducing anti-lock brakes and also the driver's airbag and seatbelt tensioner. The W116 had been replaced by the extraordinarily competent 126-series S-Class, and in a full-scale assault on the luxury market the 126-series SEC coupes were unveiled, the true replacement for the W111 coupes discontinued in 1971. Appropriately, the final 600 went to the Mercedes Museum in Stuttgart.


The striking SEC was launched in the final year of the 600, 1981.


The 190SL gave way to the W113 SL in 1963, the W100's first year.

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Events Diary

A list of UK and international car shows and events of interest to Mercedes owners

IMAGES Eric Fairchild/Kimball Studios/Retro Classics/ Salon Privé/Schloss Dyck Classic Days



190SL Day
May 25
Gathering of the W121 190SL, organised by the Mercedes-Benz Club UK
Venue Mercedes-Benz World, Brooklands, Surrey
www.mercedes-benz-club.co.uk

Historics at Brooklands
June 7
Auction of classic cars of a variety of marques and from cheap to expensive
Venue Brooklands Motor Museum, Surrey
www.historics.co.uk

The Brooklands Double Twelve Motorsport Festival
June 14-15
Speed trials on the Saturday, and driving tests on the Sunday, in pre- and post-war categories
Venue Brooklands Motor Museum, Surrey
www.brooklandsmuseum.com

Mercedes-Benz Club UK National Concours
June 21
The Club's annual concours, with cars competing in a wide range of categories and classes
Venue Mercedes-Benz UK headquarters, Milton Keynes
www.mercedes-benz-club.co.uk

Goodwood Festival of Speed
June 26-29
Modern and classic racers and road cars, demonstration runs, and many famous motoring personalities in attendance
Venue Goodwood House, Chichester, West Sussex
www.goodwood.co.uk

The German Show
July 20
Meeting for German cars of all makes and ages in the New Forest National Park
Venue National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire
www.beaulieu.co.uk

Silverstone Classic
July 25-27
Historic racing and club displays at the F1 circuit
Venue Silverstone, Northamptonshire
www.silverstoneclassic.com

W123 Day
August 17
Gathering of the 1977-1986 123-series saloons, estates and coupes. Organised for the Mercedes-Benz Club UK
Venue Chatsworth, Derbyshire
www.mercedes-benz-club.co.uk

SL Weekend
August 22-24
A weekend of events for owners of SL models of all ages
Venue Cardiff (details TBC)
www.mercedes-benz-club.co.uk

Simply Classics & Sports Car
August 24
All-makes classic car show with concours and prizes
Venue National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire
www.beaulieu.co.uk

Salon Privé
September 3-5
Exclusive classic displays, classic supercar parade
Venue Syon Park, Isleworth, west London
www.salonprivelondon.com

Beaulieu International Autojumble
September 6-7
UK's foremost annual autojumble, 2,000 stalls
Venue National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire
www.beaulieu.co.uk

RM Auctions London sale
September 8
Has become the UK's highest profile classic car auction
Venue Battersea Evolution, London
www.rmauctions.com

Goodwood Revival
September 12-14
1940s to 1960s classic and racing cars and many stalls, period dress encouraged
Venue Goodwood Circuit, Chichester, West Sussex
www.goodwood.co.uk

Classic Motor Show
November 14-16
The UK's biggest and best attended classic car show
Venue NEC, Birmingham
www.necclassicmotorshow.com

Bonhams Oxford Sale
December 8
Auction of important, high end classic cars and racing cars
Venue Oxfordshire
www.bonhams.com



Pinehurst Concours d'Elegance
May 2-4
Classic and historic car and motorcycle show, including road rally, concours displays and an auction
Venue Pinehurst Resort, North Carolina, USA
pinehurstconcours.com

Mille Miglia
May 15-18
Modern day touring recreation of the Italian road race held from 1927 until 1957
Route Brescia to Rome
www.1000miglia.eu

Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este
May 23-25
Concours show for top classics, in a beautiful lakeside setting
Venue Lake Como, Italy
www.concorsodeleganzavilladeste.com

Ponton Rally
May 29-June 1
Gathering of the 1950s saloons, Ponton ownership not required
Based Ahrweiler, Germany

Le Mans Classic
July 4-6
Classic racing and concours at the Le Mans circuit, plus classic car auction. Camping available
Venue Le Mans, France
www.lemansclassic.com

Deutsche Classic
July 12
Concours and display of German cars with substantial





Mercedes representation
Venue Oley Fairgrounds, Oley, Pennsylvania, USA
www.deutscheclassic.com

38th International Oldtimer Meeting
July 11-13
Large and well established gathering of classic cars
Venue Baden-Baden, Germany
www.oldtimer-meeting.de

Schloss Bensberg Classics
July 18-20
Attracts many top classics, concours judged by motor industry luminaries
Venue Grand Hotel, Schloss Bensberg, Germany
www.sbc2013.de

Schloss Dyck Classic Days
August 1-3
Large gathering of classic cars at a spectacular island castle
Venue Schloss Dyck Castle, Jüchen, Germany
www.schloss-dyck-classic-days.de

Pagoda Rally
August 7-10
A gathering of W113 Pagodas in the Harz Mountains. All UK places already filled, however
Venue Gosslar, Germany
www.mercedes-benz-club.co.uk

AvD Oldtimer Grand Prix
August 8-10
Classic car racing on the Nürburgring GP track and on the challenging 14-mile Nordschleife circuit
Venue Nürburgring, Germany
www.avd.de

Legends of the Autobahn
August 15
German marque meeting, with concours competition for pre-1992 cars. An established part of the Monterey week of classic car events and auctions
Venue Monterey, California, USA
www.legendsoftheautobahn.org

Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance
August 17
Exclusive classic car festival, includes RetroAuto parts and memorabilia event, plus various classic car auctions
Venue Monterey, California, USA
www.pebblebeachconcours.net

Gull Wing Convention
September 10-14
Long-running annual get together for 300SL Gullwings and Roadsters
Venue Banff, Alberta, Canada
www.gullwinggroup.org

Klausenrace
September 26-28 (dates TBC)
A driving event based on the famous races between 1922 and 1934 on the 1,948m mountain pass
Route Klausen Pass, Switzerland
www.klausenrennen.com

Paris Motor Show
October 4-19
A biennial mainstream motor show alternating with the Frankfurt event
Venue Paris Expo, Paris
www.mondial-automobile.com

RACV Motorclassica
October 24-26
Australia's biggest classic car event including concours
Venue Royal Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, Australia
www.motorclassica.com.au

Auto e Moto d'Epoca
October 24-26
All-makes classic car show. Has a 'Dutch' auction with descending prices
Venue Padua, Italy
www.autoemotodepoca.com

LA Auto Show
November 21-30
Mainstream car industry showcase on the US west coast
Venue Los Angeles Convention Center, California, USA
www.laautoshow.com

Essen Motor Show
November 29-December 7
Modern/tuning car show, but with many displays of classics
Venue Messe Essen, Germany
www.siha.de

Scottsdale Auctions
January 15-16, 2015 (dates TBC)
A weekend of classic car sales in the US by major international auction houses, with early-year values established
Venue Near Scottsdale, Arizona
www.rmauctions.com

Retromobile
February 4-8, 2015
The first big European classic car fair of the year, with cars, car art, and general memorabilia
Venue Porte de Versailles, Paris, France
www.retromobile.com


Schloss Dyck Classic Days


Deutsche Classic


Retro Classic


Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance

New Zealand Classic Car Show
February 7-9, 2015 (dates TBC)
Gathering of classic cars, concours and various club displays. In 2014 it attracted aound 700 visitors
Venue Ellerslie Racecourse, Auckland, New Zealand
www.concours.org.nz

Antwerp Classic Salon
February 27-March 1, 2015 (dates TBC)
Classic car show for the Benelux countries. Some 350 stands, with restorers, classic-car tuners across four halls. Also holds a concours competition
Venue Antwerp Expo, Antwerp, Belgium
www.siha.de

Geneva Motor Show
March 6-16, 2015
The year's first major European motor show. Model unveilings, plus an excellent classic museum adjacent
Venue Palexpo, Geneva, Switzerland
www.salon-auto.ch

Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance
March 13-15, 2015
Prestigious classic-car show, including a number of exclusive classic car auctions
Venue Amelia Island, Florida
www.ameliaconcours.org

Techno Classica
March 25-29, 2015 (dates TBC)
The premier European classic and modern classic car show, a must-visit event for enthusiasts
Venue Messe Essen, Essen, Germany
www.siha.de

Retro Classic
March 26-29, 2015
Eight halls full of classic cars, plus parts and memorabilia
Venue Stuttgart, Germany
www.retroclassics.de

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info@classicmercedesmagazine.com

Classic classifieds



E320, left-hand drive, 1994, US model, 149,000 miles, Smoke Silver, beige leather interior, fully loaded. Car needs some TLC but drives well. Car is in UK but has Netherlands registration. Partial service history. £1,200 or best offer. Tel: 07572 029605. Kingston-upon-Thames. *[CM8W9]*



380SL, auto, 77,728 miles, full service history with original books toolkit. Turquoise blue with beige check cloth interior, soft and hardtop. A fine example, a good investment with numberplate DNL 921. £18,500. Tel: 0208 686 4776. South Croydon. *[CM8W5]*



R129 SL320, superb throughout with panoramic roof and FSH, only 98,000 miles in silver with immaculate grey leather trim, upgraded alloys and memory seats. £6,500 ONO. Tel: Steve 07891 243196. Cheshire. *[CM8W7]*



C36 AMG. Rare low mileage C36, 45,000 miles. Fully serviced by local Mercedes specialist. Outstanding condition, mechanically excellent, bodywork in near perfect condition. AMG numberplate included. Taxed and tested until September 2014.Can email more photos. £7,250 ONO. Tel: 0191 5848135. Sunderland. *[EFW27R]*



CL600, coupe, 1997,153,000 miles with a comprehensive personalised history folder, mechanically sound V12 with autobox, bodywork good, 17-year old car sold without warranty implied or given. Car is in Northern Ireland. Taxed and MOT'd. £3,250 no offers. Tel: 07860 215806. Newtownards, Co Down. *[CM8W6]*



W124 E320 Cabriolet, 1994. Silver with black leather, 73,000 miles, one family owner, maintained regardless of cost, FSH and all receipts, £12,000 or best offer. For more info call Charlie on 07801 495466. Chelsea, London. *[CM8W12]*



E300 TD, 1998, reliable mechanically and MOT till June 2014, 80,000 miles, serviced regularly by myself. Bodywork has some slight rust, nothing major though, cloth interior, £1,200 ONO. Tel: Rab on 07896 556741. Ayrshire. *[EFW34R]*



500SEC, 1983, metallic willow green with cream leather upholstery, 95,000 miles, service history, very good condition throughout. Same home for last 24 years. Best offer around £3,995. Tel: 01924 840446 or 07962 155346. Dewsbury, West Yorkshire. *[CM8W8]*

W123 230E, manual, 108,000 miles, 1981, met silver blue, reducing collection. Tel: 07710 350602. London. *[EF]*



S500 SWB, 1995/N reg, 71,000 genuine miles, Azurite, mushroom nappa, heated seats, superb throughout, minor blemishes, MOT August 2014, no tax (SORN). Interior commensurate with 71,000 miles, full stamped service history. £3,790 OVNO. Tel: 07946 510858. Barnsley. *[CM8W1]*



E220 Cabriolet, 1997/P reg, 74,000 miles, FSH, blue with cream leather, new roof, new respray with new front wings, refurbished wheels, new MOT, new brakes, two new tyres, £12,000. Tel: 07949 102740. Essex. *[CM8W2]*



230CE, 1990, auto, coupe, excellent condition, petrol unleaded, 98,564 miles, MOT Sept 2014, e/sunroof, black leather seats, FMBSH, £6,950. Tel: Dan 07805 602201 or email danielpsouthall@hotmail.com Kidderminster. *[CM8W4]*



E220 Cabriolet, 1997/P reg, 74,000 miles, FSH, blue with cream leather, new roof, new respray with new front wings, refurbished wheels, new MOT, new brakes, two new tyres, £12,000. Tel: 07949 102740. Essex. *[CM8W2]*

S123 230TE, auto, 120,000 miles, 1985, metallic silver, reducing collection. Tel: 07710 350602. London. *[EF]*



S124 230TE, estate, automatic with genuine 39,000 miles from new and just one previous owner. 1990/H reg (private plate EDS 11 does NOT come with the car). Almandine (Garnet) metallic red with full seven seats, mushroom beige leather interior. Four OEM roof bars, rear cargo net, rear load cover, electric windows, soft close tailgate, sunroof. OEM unkerbed Mercedes alloy wheels and if required the original set of five- to eight-hole Mercedes alloy wheels and tyres (all with plenty of tread). This car has been cosseted all its life and was just used for shopping trips, and has been in storage (SORN'd) since August 2006, but cleaned, polished and started regularly. All previous MOTs, tax discs, keys, wallet full of instruction manuals, FMBSH up to 32,000. Only one storage mark to RHS rear wing other than that bodywork is immaculate with no signs of rust and all chrome and body has a deep shine. Leather interior perfect, Mercedes maroon overmats on top of beige carpet. If you seek the best this is the car for you. Viewing welcome at Waltham Abbey in Essex. First offer over £5,000 secures. Tel: 01992 714404 or text your offer and contact details to 07867 618100. *[EFW31R]*



E200 Estate, 1994, automatic, PAS. 129,000 miles electric windows, central locking, MOT. Vgc, no rust must be seen last owner 13 years. £2,850. Tel: 07836 548731. London. *[EFW29R]*



C124 320CE, coupe, 24v, 217bhp, four-speed automatic, M494 LYL (1994), 87,456 current mileage, FSH, finished in metallic black with mushroom leather interior, black chrome AMG type alloys, driver and passenger airbags, four previous owners, electric tilt and slide sunroof/windows, electric front seats, centre armrest with lockable pocket, rear headrests, headlamp wash-wipe, leather steering and gearknob, air con, walnut veneer, first aid kit and fire extinguisher, original Blaupunkt radio/cassette, CD changer if preferred,(upgraded front load Kenwood CD/Radio), tinted windows, upgraded xenon lights, Cobra Cat 1 alarm system remote, full closure with key. Owned car for approx eight years, both doors replaced about five years ago supplied by MB dealership. Thinking of replacing front wings as these are only body parts that go with these modern classics. Classic insurance value £10K. Car will be sold with 12 months MOT and full valet. Possibly have full leather interior including door cards connolised and any body blemishes done if price negotiated is right. I have another set of AMG type alloys which are centre colour coded with diamond cut edge negotiable. Tel: 07962 381474 or 020 8537 1285. Middlesex. ***[EFW28R]***



230CE, classic Mercedes in very good condition, 62,000 miles, MOT till June 2014, AMG bodykit, J reg. Intermittent fault at idle, could be damp in relays. £3,000 ONO. Tel: Mark 07815 710650 for more info. Ayrshire. ***[EFW33R]***



R129 280SL, hard and soft top, 150,000 miles, stainless steel exhaust, low profile wide alloys, all electric seats, etc. Good condition except gearbox just gone, pensioner owned, cannot afford to repair. Bargain price £1,000. Tel: 01257 400830. Wigan. ***[EFP26R]***



C280 Elegance, automatic, 1995, 62,000 miles, FSH, Tourmaline Green, cream leather, alloy wheels. MOT February 2015, tax September 2014, 15 service stamps, superb condition, previous owner for 13 years. Only 62,000 miles. £1,995. Tel: 07850 012794. North Yorkshire. ***[EFW24R]***



500SEC, 1989/G, brilliant condition, meticulously maintained by enthusiast, garaged since new. Champagne silver/beige leather, electric seats/head restraints, cruise, sunroof, 162,000 miles. FSH last 15 years, £4,500 ONO. Tel: 01628 631080. Maidenhead. ***[EFP23R]***



190E, J reg, 96,000 miles, FSH, taxed and MOT, two-litre petrol, manual, silver, blue interior, electric windows and sunroof, radio/cassette and CD changer, £2,475 ONO. Tel: 07947 481995. Cheshire. ***[EP22R]***

S123 280TE, auto, 112,000 miles, 1984, metallic petrol blue, reducing collection. Tel: 07710 350602. London. ***[EF]***



560SEC, 1988, ex James Hunt, 140,000 miles. Excellent runner, used daily, taxed/tested, needs some minor tidying /TLC. Black, tan leather, loads of history/receipts. £2,000 spent last MOT. Agreed value £5,500, sensible offers over £5,000 invited. E-mail jwmj@btinternet.com or tel: 01480 532651. ***[EFW21R]***



E220 Coupe, auto, 1994/L reg, silver with full grey leather, FSH, 108,000 miles, silver slot alloys, new exhaust, tax Oct 31 2014, MOT Nov 24 2014. Lovely condition. £2,795 ONO. Tel: 01903 530393. Worthing. ***[EFW18R]***



E320 CDI Avantgarde. Top of the range, X reg, superb condition, two owners, long MOT and tax, 130,000 miles, history, 45mpg, drives superb, genuine sale, £2,500 ONO. Tel: 07716 497113. Bedfordshire. ***[EFP3R]***



S320 SWB saloon, Azurite Blue metallic, cream leather. Everything electric: steering wheel, headrests, sunroof, climate, cruise, sat nav, one previous owner, only 30,000 miles from new. Never used in rain. Special order, as new, £8,995 (private plate not included). Tel: 07774 678886 or 01588 620683. Montgomery-Powys. ***[EP15R]***



E430 AMG, 1998, purple, lovely condition for year. Full service history, tax and MOT. All usual Mercedes refinements, alloy wheels, heated leather seats, climate control, electric windows. Tel: 01373 864971. Wiltshire. ***[EFW12R]***



R107 280SL, 1985, only 73,000 miles, exceptional condition, drives faultless, hard and soft top, white, ivory leather, ivory wool carpets, no leaks, lovely spec, garaged, £10,995. Tel: 01663 762 224 or 07710 611 113. Stockport. ***[EW13R]***



C126 500SEC, coupe, 1990, Diamond Blue metallic, soft grey leather, full service history, top spec, excellent condition, great car, great investment. Please call for further details, £4,995. Tel: 01663 762 224 or 07710 611 113. Stockport. ***[EW36R]***



W124 500E Porsche hand built widebody, Swedish import in excellent condition. 18-inch genuine Carlsson wheels. UK reg, tax Dec 2014, MOT Dec 2014. May take PX. Two-tone dark grey on light grey with black leather. Tel: 07770363692. Email: gmorss@me.com Warwickshire. ***[EFW11R]***

C123 280CE, auto, 80,000 miles, beige, 1983, reducing collection. Tel: 07710 350602. London. ***[EF]***

Classic classifieds



C123 230CE, auto, 1983/A reg, Astral Silver, Anthracite cloth interior. ABS, electric sunroof, electric windows. rear headrests. Original first aid kit, booklets, toolkit, stereo. 127,000 miles. Excellent condition throughout. Substantial money recently spent. Impeccable underside. Everything working. Lots of history. Tax Dec 2014. OIRO £10,950. Tel: 07887 603676. Hertfordshire. ***[EFW7R]***



R129 500SL, 1991, only 39,000 miles. Two owners. All extras including ADS. Extensive history, all books/ keys present. Exceptional condition for year. New Dunlop tyres. Hardtop, wind deflector, toolkit etc. Current fastidious owner for past seven years. Tel: 07812 046570. Sompting. ***[EFW4R]***



E220 Coupe Sportline, 1995, automatic, Smoke Silver, mushroom leather, 93,000 miles, air con, electric seats, FSH, MOTs, waxoyled, AMG alloys, MOT December 2014, £3,500. Tel: 01953 600432. Norfolk. ***[DEP25R]***



230 four-door saloon, 1985, 139,000 miles, owned for 12 years, FSH, light metallic blue, beige cloth interior, good solid body, 12 months MOT, drives very nice, slight TLC needed. £1,800. Tel: 01494 880046 or 07802 695218. Marlow, Bucks. ***[DEP26R]***



R107 500SL Roadster, automatic, 1986/D reg. Outstanding, 81,000 miles. FSH, Smoke Silver, brown sports check, ABS, electric windows, cruise control, original wheels, new tyres, factory fitted roof, headlight wipers. Excellent example. Priced to sell £12,499. Tel: 07767 886208. Islington, London. ***[DEW23R]***



500SL, 1984. Excellent original condition. Rare Thistle Green two-tone with full green leather interior, with rear seats and rear lap belts. Remarkable original example even down to Becker radio/cassette. 105,000 miles with MOTs and service history book and invoices. It drives superbly with no issues, very smooth with effortless power. Extras include foglamps, electric windows, heated rear screen. £8,450. Tel: 07827 949490. Surrey. ***[DEW24R]***



C220 CDI Elegance, auto, diesel, 1999, 95,000 miles, Champagne Gold, black leather, taxed and MOT'd, full service history, very well looked after, £1,500. Tel: 01494 880046 or 07802 695218. Bucks. ***[DEP27R]***

V140 for a project or spares, may split 6.0 V12 had full Mercedes service up to last MOT. £POA. Tel: 01339 882193. Aberdeenshire. ***[EF]***

500SEC, 1990, 128,000 miles, blue/cream leather, electric heated front seats. Air con, sunroof, radio and cassette. MOT and tax. Nardi Torino steering wheel/Duchatelet dashboard. £4,500. Tel: 01622 734218. Maidstone. ***[EF]***



W123 230E, auto, saloon, 1985, beautiful car, no rust, MOT may and tax, Labrador Blue, see advert on car and classic website. I'm afraid it is in North Scotland near Inverness but well worth the journey. £4,500. Tel: 01349 865474. Dingwall. ***[DEW18R]***



R129 SL500, 1997, 83,000 miles, black with mushroom, 13 stamps, recent oil service, brakes, tyres, battery and catalytic converter. £6,000. Tel: 01308 420 855. Bridport. ***[DEP20R]***



SL60 AMG, 1998/S, Obsidian Black, exclusive nappa two-tone black and grey leather trim, ADS adaptive suspension, navigation, xenons, 18-inch AMG wheels, AMG bodykit, 60,000 miles, £24,995. Tel: 07946 608973. London. ***[DEW17R]***



300TD Elegance, automatic, metallic wine, 1997, 83,700 miles. Two previous owners. Last Mercedes Benz service July 2013. MOT 31/07/2014. Charcoal cloth interior, hands free, ipod, quality radio/CD. Discs, pads, battery, lower suspension joints 2013. Beautiful car. £2,200. TEL: 07949 965020 or 01455 637232. Leicestershire. ***[DEW14R]***

W201 190E, auto, 127,000 miles, white, 1989, reducing collection. Tel: 07710 350602. London. ***[EF]***



CL420, pillarless coupe. Over £80,000 new. Fully loaded with all the extras. First registered 1997 with personal plate. Included: five-speed auto/sport and winter mode, rare platinum silver paintwork complimented with full extended beige leather interior, excellent condition throughout. Bodywork is straight and true, regularly washed and polished, interior in great condition with no tears and very little wear, genuine low mileage, complimented with extensive Mercedes and specialist service history, loads of invoices and receipts. Maintained to the highest of standards with loads of money spent, comes with 11 months MOT. Fully HPI clear, no accidents etc. Amazing car for the money at only £2,995 ONO. A very rare opportunity to own a fast appreciating classic. Tel: 07885 227057. Salisbury. ***[DEW10R]***



S124 230TE Sportline, estate, 1991, 2,299cc, petrol, auto, FSH, 11 months MOT, taxed June 2014, 195,000 miles, all service receipts and certificates, 15-hole alloys, electric windows, sunroof, aerial, seven seats, excellent bodywork. £1,950 ONO. Tel: 07810 504861 or email S.G.Wetherell@ googlemail.com North Yorkshire. ***[DEW8R]***

CLK230 Cabriolet, automatic, 1999, 109,000 miles, tax and MOT, Quartz Blue, AMG alloys and cill kit, Alpine stereo, good condition, £2,200 ONO. Tel: 01483 282861. Guildford, Surrey. ***[EF]***

C124 E220 Coupe, silver, tax, MOT, 130,500 miles, new brakes, two new tyres, sunroof, electric windows, well maintained. Tel: 01737 553356. Surrey. ***[EF]***



S320 L, 1997, 132,000 miles, long MOT and tax, well maintained, excellent condition, little use recent years, sale due to ill health, £1,500. Tel: 02392 863391. Portsmouth. *[DEP3R]*



280SL, 1980, 82,000 miles, automatic, hard and soft top, immaculate condition throughout, service history, tax and MOT, £11,500 ONO. Tel: 01736 755779. Cornwall. *[DEP2R]*



200E, saloon, 1993, automatic, black with grey trim, grey fabric interior, removable radio, service history, well looked after always garaged, 122,288 miles, £POA. Tel: 01322 274262. Dartford. *[DEP1R]*



SL500, auto, 1989/G reg, metallic silver, hard and soft top, blue leather, sat nav, CD player, 88,000 miles, hardly used in the last six years, superb original rust free condition, tax and MOT. Please call for further details and photos. £14,950 ONO. Tel: 07917 306154. Cheshire. *[CDW2R]*

190D, manual, tax and MOT, 1987, 63,000 miles, garaged and in excellent condition. Cream/white and blue cloth interior. Photo on request, £3,500. Tel: 01770 700371. Isle of Arran, Scotland. *[EF]*



280S, 1970, automatic, rare saloon car finished in Powder Blue. 43 years old, one owner, dry stored, remarkable condition, rust free, all interior original, drives perfectly & fully serviced. For more photos or details please email apanteli@overmodeltd.co.uk or call 07790 480727. Manchester. *[CW15R]*



S124 E280 Estate, 1995, five-speed automatic. Malachite Green, mushroom leather, seven seater, great spec with the optional auto, only 117,000 miles, truly goes very well. With history, recently has had an extensive overhaul/ service. New engine wiring loom, plus full service. All in a very good car! £4,700. Tel: 07899 801373. Gloucestershire. *[CW14R]*



E320, 1996, 180,000 miles some surface rust, FSH by Merc specialist, excellent runner. New headlights, water pump and many other. Short tax and MOT. No oil loss, gearbox rebuilt two years ago and little mileage since. Best offer around £500. Tel: 02083130581. Bromley. *[CDW12R]*

S500 Coupe, 1996, 89,000 miles, blue/cream leather, MOT and tax. Electric, heated, memory seats. Air con, sunroof, double glazed windows. Radio/CD player, serviced regularly. £3,750. Tel: 0771 8165584 or 01622734218. Maidstone, Kent. *[EF]*



SL320, 1995. Just had big restoration including strip and full respray at a cost of £2,000, seats removed and carpets cleaned, new wings, all five wheels refurbished fully, various mechanical parts replaced, comes with hardtop, Lorinser manifolds fitted.145,000 miles but looks like 10,000! Complete with MOT/tax. Lovely car. Tel: 01543 370126 or 07866 457501. Staffs. *[CDW11R]*



500SEL, automatic, 1990, light blue metallic with immaculate cream leather interior. The same owner from new husband and wife. Both non smokers, only 79,500 original mileage. Heated and electric front and rear seats ,electric sunroof , air conditioning, cruise control and all the usual spec. Original vehicle with no accidents, no paint jobs. Alpine CD player. MOT till January 2015, road tax end of June 2014. A very rare one owner from new car. Any inspection welcome. £3,495. Please contact for full details. Tel: 07760 445655. Kent. *[CDW8R]*



420SL,1989, 90,000 miles. Black leather, immaculate bodywork and chrome. Loads of service history and MOTs. Immobiliser. Rear seats. Steve Redfern serviced. £12,995.Tel: 07801 749522. Surrey. *[CDW7R]*

S123 280TE, auto, 142,000 miles, 1984, metallic thistle green, reducing collection. Tel: 07710 350602. London. *[EF]*



190, genuine 34,000 miles, FSH, previous MOTs, manual gearbox, original excellent condition, £2,750. Tel: 0121 354 4788. *[CDP6R]*



G-Wagen 230, petrol, 1990. These white ones are the most sought after of them all. MOT'd, no rust on chassis at all and body very good as well. Starts and runs great. All the nonsense about diesels is quite over exaggerated, these will do 25mpg, so there is only 5mpg in it at best, plus these are more reliable! More pics and info on southwestmercs website. £3,900. Tel: 07899 801373. Car in GL4 6PH, Gloucestershire. *[CW13R]*

190D, manual, tax and MOT, 1987, 63,000 miles, garaged and in excellent condition. Cream/white and blue cloth interior. Photo on request, £3,500. Tel: 01770 700371. Isle of Arran, Scotland. *[EF]*

S123 280TE, auto, 142,000 miles, 1984, metallic thistle green, reducing collection. Tel: 07710 350602. London. *[EF]*

S500 Coupe, 1996, 89,000 miles, blue/cream leather, MOT and tax. Electric, heated, memory seats. Air con, sunroof, double glazed windows. Radio/CD player, serviced regularly. £3,750. Tel: 0771 8165584 or 01622734218. Maidstone, Kent. *[EF]*

E320 CDI Avantgarde, top of the range saloon, X reg, Tiptronic, auto, superb condition, two owners, long MOT and tax, history, all MOTs, 130,000 miles, drives like new, genuine sale, £2,350. Tel: 07716 497113. Bedfordshire. *[CD]*

Classic classifieds

PARTS, MISC & ACCESSORIES



C200 Elegance full leather interior, comes with all four headrests, heated front seats, door cards with wood effect trimmings, centre console, in stunning condition no wear on bolsters or no rips. Ideal for up grade, £550 no offers, buyer collects no time wasters. Tel: 07879 215057. West Midlands. *[CM8W11]*

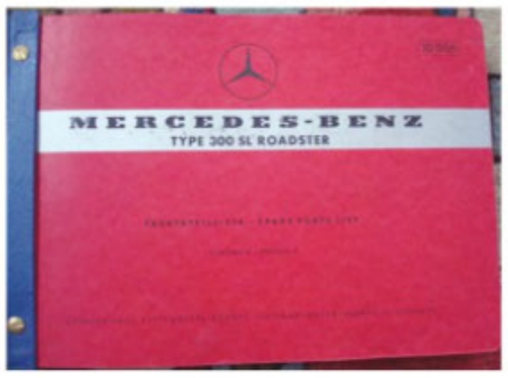


Mk 1 VW Golf GTI VDO type gauges, comes with wiring loom and sender, very rare item to find. In mint condition would be ideal for any project. £240 no offers. Please note buyer must collect, no time wasters. Tel: 07879 215057. West Midlands. *[CM8W10]*



R129 SL panoramic glass hardtop, immaculate condition both inside and out, finished in vivanite green/turquoise metallic with soft grey interior trim, £1,500. Tel: 07815 776196. Bromley, Kent. *[EFW26R]*

W210 E220 diesel saloon parts, 2001, 2x front doors, 1x rear/o/s door, front/n/s wing, bonnet, 4x injectors, ABS pump, various ECUs, f/pass airbag, exp tank, brake fluid res, washer bottle, all cheap, ring for details. Tel: 020 8660 4538/ 07584 020272. Surrey. *[CM8]*



1963 300SL Roadster spare parts list book, original and rare, 522 pages, $2,000. Tel: 00 358 451371946. Sweden. *[EFW25R]*



Tow bar and electrics for W126 300SE, 420SE, 280SE, 380SE (not 500SE), etc. Excellent condition, £300. Tel: 07814 016411. Farnborough. *[EFW20R]*



W123 four-speed manual gearbox, low miles (84,000 miles), very good condition, buyer collects from GU14 9AG, or can deliver within 30-mile radius for free, or £1 per mile 40 miles+, part number 1152612501. Tel: 07814 016411. Farnborough. *[EFW19R]*





320 CDI front wings, silver, undersealed, no dents, £30 each. Also dashboard, 100,000 miles, full working, £75. A few other spares (210-series E-Class), phone for details. Tel: 07716 497113. Bedfordshire. *[EFP8/9R]*



Genuine Mercedes alloy wheels. 4x 15-inch wheels – two with Michelin Primacy XSE tyres (part worn 4-5mm tread remaining, size 195/65R15 91V), two without tyres. Wheels have been completely refurbished by The Wheel Specialist, Nottingham to a high standard, and are in perfect, unused, condition, without MB centres. Wheel type is MB part no. 202 401 05 02 ET37. These are 6.5Jx15H2 types fitted on a W202 C280 Elegance model; made in 1997. £250. Due to the weight and condition of the wheels, the buyer should arrange to collect (Northamptonshire). E-mail: tpratt@powernet.co.uk or tel: 0788 423 2305. Northants. *[EFW10R]*



R1 PCE personal numberplate, on retention document. Tel: 0797 9693958. Stockport. *[EFW5R]*

190E set of four steel wheels with good Continental tyres, 185/65/15. Also full set of wheel trims in good condition. Bargain £60 the lot, no offers, buyer collects. Tel: 01803 551383. Paignton, Devon. *[CM8]*

Host of 190 and 124 Mercedes Parts. Tel: 01737 553356. Surrey. *[EF]*

Stainless steel bumper for classic car, you can use forever, please contact me for more information. Tel: 00 84822452841. Email: ptt_rooney@sgbumperscar.com Vietnam. *[EF]*

A350 CLK on retention, at present on my CLK, price will include DVLA fees. Numberplate for sale to best offer. Tel: 01934 712713. Leeds. *[DE]*

G-Wagen 463, heated rear screen. £35 including delivery. UK only. Tel: 01475 726360. Greenock. *[DE]*

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



200,000km genuine metal badge, with original fixing kit. £85. Tel: 07969 231414. Essex. *[DEW6R]*



Evo II/E500 limited edition wheels, four 8.25Jx17. Excellent condition. £1,200. Tel: 07969 231414. Essex. *[DEW5R]*



Evolution II badges. Genuine items with packaging. Very rare. £975. Tel: 07969 231414. Essex. *[DEW4R]*

WANTED

Pair or single front seats for 1992 R129 SL in beige leather. Could take door panels if good, will collect, cash. Tel: 07864 553010. Kent. *[EF]*

W124 500E/E500. Tel: 0208 986 6567. London. *[E]*

Two rear headrests for 463 G-Wagen. Tel: 01475 726360. Greenock. *[DE]*

Ponton diesel saloon 180D. Only early model, tall grille type. Cash waiting, RHD or LHD, will travel. Tel: 0151 639 0149. Wallasey. *[DE]*

Four 14-inch wheels for 111-series car, plus trims and centre hub caps. Please no silly prices! Tel: 01204 571140. Bolton. *[DE]*

Haynes Owners Workshop Manual (or similar publication) for 300SL, 1989/G reg. Tel: 07503 640106. *[DE]*

Toolkit for 300SL, 1989/G reg. Tel: 07503 640106 **[DE]**

Hardtop stand. Tel: 07503 640106. *[DE]*

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Mercedes-Benz 280SE 3.5 saloons. Easy and very worthwhile projects. Two cars, both 1972 automatic V8s with superb MB-Tex interiors and various new parts including fuel pump, stainless exhaust etc. Blue car has just 27,000 miles (documented). Needs sills. Green/black car was MOT'd 2 years ago and has factory air conditioning and an excellent history with all handbooks and 84,000 miles. £3,850 each or £6,250 for the pair. For more information, please call 07798 797262. Gloucs. *[CMH7 & CMH8]*

Rare 1967 Pagoda 250SL. left-hand drive, European version, it has spent most of its life in West Coast, USA, a beautiful rust free example. Runs and drives well. £32,999 ONO. For more information please call 020 8399 5368. Surbiton, Surrey. *[CMH1]*

190E, 1.8-litre, 1990, 68,000 miles, one owner, full service history, sunroof, electric windows. Recently spent £1,800. In perfect condition, six months tax and MOT. £1,500, no offers. For more information, please call 01268 281722. Basildon, Essex. *[CMH11]*

300SL, convertible, 1990, black, automatic. Matching hardtop, full new black hood. Cream leather, 18-inch OZ alloys, walnut wood finish. Sorned. MOT October 2012. In excellent condition. 80,000 Miles. £7,250. For more information, please call 07720 399871. *[GP2R]*

280SL, 1984 on an A reg. 110,600 miles. This car has been in my ownership for 20 years. During this time, it has benefited from a complete restoration including a bare metal re-spray, new brakes, suspension and steering. No expense has been spared in maintaining this classic example of the sports car genre. An immaculate car finished in metallic silver with a works hardtop and a new black soft top. Garaged during the winter with leisure use during the summer only. Drives like a dream and turns head (if that is your bag!). £12,000. Please call 07970 573038 for more details or to make an appointment to view. South Warwickshire. *[CMH10]*

450SL, 1979, 101,912 miles, convertible, petrol, automatic, 4,520cc, hardtop, good tyres. In good condition. £8,000. For more information, please call Mike on 01293 862374. Horley, Surrey. *[CMH12]*

560SEL, 1990, full service history, Diamond Blue metallic, navy leather, 148,000 miles, third owner, automatic full spec, beautiful car. €8,750. Please call 00353 87 285 4004. Co. Meath, Ireland. *[FP7]*

260E, automatic, 1987 reg, blue, 2,599cc, petrol, 47,065 miles, MOT until September 2012. A few dents and scratches on bodywork. Four brand new tyres, engine runs well. Any reasonable offer welcome. Buyer collects. For more information, please call 01771 644471 or 07881 931978. Peterhead. *[CMH9]*

280SL, 1980, 73,000 miles, convertible, petrol, automatic, white. Has been recently upgraded, blue leather upholstery. Hard and soft tops, both immaculate. Recently serviced. MOT and taxed. Cobra remote alarm and immobiliser professionally fitted. CD player. Garaged and in pristine condition. £9,500 ONO. For more information, please call Brian on 01634 220792. Rochester, Kent. *[CMH13]*

420SE, Almandine, cream leather, 157,000 miles. Some service history. Wheelarches and chrome are rust free. Alloy wheels and interior have recently been refurbished. Good oil pressure, Sony CD player. £2,500. For more information, please call Paul on 07824 484334. Blackpool. *[CMA1]*

300SL, 1988, white, blue hood and interior. 82,000 miles, automatic with sports and economy mode. Galvanised and waxoyled body, hardtop, rear seat, ABS, electronic windows, alloys T&T. In excellent condition. £12,995. For more information, please call 01287 624 800 or 07966 416 818. Saltburn, North East England. *[FF4R]*

230CE Coupe, 1982, petrol, 2,299cc, 98,000 miles, two-door, automatic, metallic blue, power steering, central locking, blue interior, electric sunroof, Mercedes-Benz alloys, starts and drives. £850. For more information, please call Tomas on 07435 449404. Feltham. *[CMH20]*

380SL, 1988, 72,000 miles, two lady owners from new. In excellent condition all around. Cream leather interior. Heated seats, beautiful matching hardtop with stand. MOT until March 2012. £16,000 OVNO. For more information, please call 07582 465551. West Malling, Kent. *[GP2R]*

1972 Mercedes 6.3, right-hand drive saloon. Moss Green with parchment leather interior for restoration. Offers when seen. For more information, please contact Alastair on 07710 350602 or Nigel on 07768 918658. Lincolnshire. *[CMH]*

The deadline for Issue 2 is **Friday September 14th** Issue 2 is published October 5th.

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On the case

Traditional leather suitcases are the perfect accompaniment for a classic car. Tim French looks at what is available, starting with the highly collectable bespoke suitcases made for Mercedes in the 1950s

IMAGES Bentleys/Caracalla 1947/Daimler AG/Dare Classics/Richard Truesdell

The rounded styling of Mercedes-Benz models, and indeed most other cars from the 1950s, particularly at the rear, was a challenge for owners when it came to loading the boot or even the rear seat for a trip away. But this was also a golden opportunity for a number of firms who produced luggage specially shaped to fit where normal suitcases wouldn't.

In the case of Mercedes, it was offered as an official option for the sports models of the 1950s, the 300S/Sc Coupe and Roadster, the 300SL Gullwing, and the 300SL and 190SL. Supplied mainly by a German maker, Karl Baisch, it was an expensive option and hence now collectable.



This is authentic 1950s fitted luggage for a 300Sc, and utterly exquisite it is.

You need only to look at a W187 220 or W188 300S with a set of tapered, made-to-measure cases strapped into their slender boots or nominal rear seats to realise why some collectors feel the car is incomplete without them. And that is why original sets, not made since the late 1950s, fetch such big money. "I have seen $35,000 [about £20,900] asked for an original luggage set, and I'm told some have gone higher than that," says Ollie Dare, who for four decades has been making reproduction luggage sets for Mercedes and other classics at his premises in Elk Grove in California. Even luggage sets in very poor condition – and most of them were well used in their time – are sought after, for the original frames.

The Dare Classics catalogue caters for most Mercedes classics, and the product range has extended far beyond that offered by Mercedes at the time. Dare has, for example, designed a special five-piece set for the compact 190SL Roadster, its biggest case able to serve as a stand-up mini-wardrobe with coat hangers if required. Reproductions of classic products are often of better quality than the originals, and this would appear to be the case with Dare's luggage. "The originals weren't very well made, they were a bit basic," says Dare, who found himself in the custom luggage business after deciding to make himself a case for his electric guitar in 1973, and afterwards receiving an order for a luggage set from a member of the Gull Wing Group. "They were pig-grained vinyl, but I use cowhide to look like pigskin."

Now 73, and with an order book as full as ever, Dare makes up a batch of frames, and then upholsters them all, thereby leading to variable delivery delays, which could be up to six months. He charges $4,800 (about £2,870) plus $300 to $500 (£180 to £300) for the leather, the total around half the price an average original set would go for, and not such a large amount in the classic Mercedes context.

Normal vintage leather suitcases will, of course, perfectly complement your classic Mercedes. "Old leather suitcases are really collectable, but they have to be in exceptionally good condition," warns Tim Bent of vintage travel-goods specialist Bentleys in Knightsbridge, London. "If they are battered and down at heel they are not going to be worth much." Reckon on paying £700 to £900 for a near immaculate case, and bear in mind that smaller, overnight-style cases are worth more than larger ones, primarily because they are more useful.

There is, of course, a vast choice of new but traditionally styled luggage aimed at classic car owners. Italian specialist Caracalla 1947, for instance sells its 722 Collection leather holdall priced at £495, bearing the number 722, which was the start number of the Mercedes 300SLR driven to victory by Stirling Moss and Denis Jenkinson in the 1955 Mille Miglia. Mercedes-Benz Classic is also in on the nostalgia game, its luggage range including the Trolley Suitcase Classic, a lightweight canvas case in a traditional style, costing €300 (£250). You have to put your things in a bag when travelling, so why not use something appropriate.

ABOVE
Mercedes-Benz Classic offers this modern version of a traditional suitcase.

LEFT TO RIGHT
Caracalla 1947 holdall salutes the 300SLR racer; fitted luggage from Dare Classics; old, traditional leather suitcases are now collectable and expensive.









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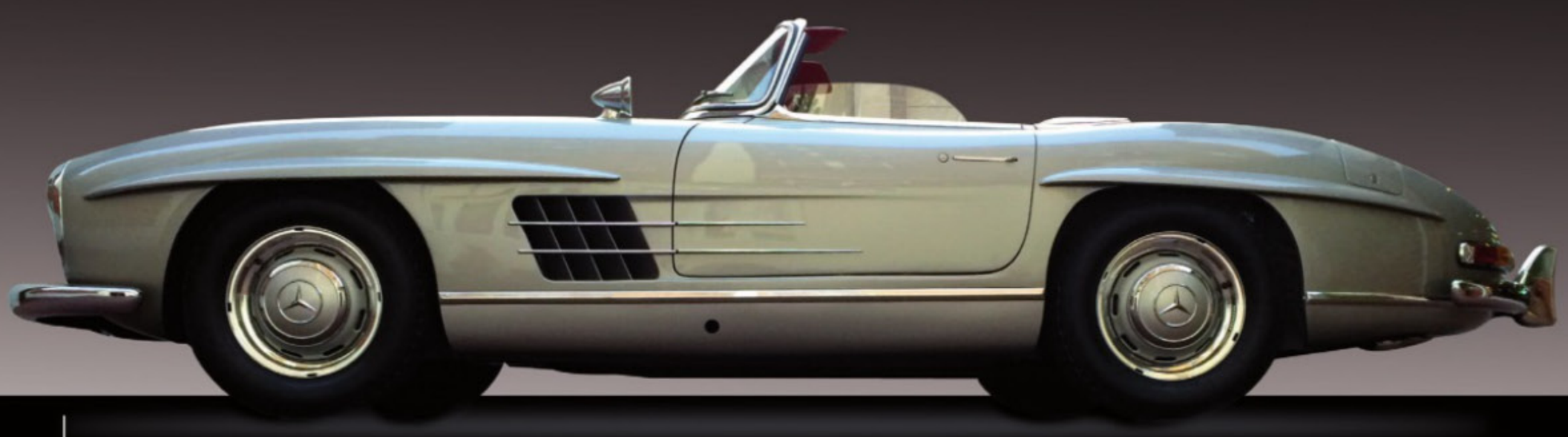
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