

# MERCEDES

E N T H U S I A S T

SEPTEMBER 2007 £3.60

**FULL ROADTEST INSIDE!**

## SLR COMES GOOD!

Open top mega Merc finally lives up to the promise



## E500s TO THE MAX!

V8 W124 TRIO HIT THE TRACK **Page 34**

### 300SL Showdown

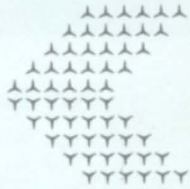
■ Gullwing or Roadster: come that lottery win which should you really buy? **Page 42**



### Burning Rubber

■ On track with the Welsh enthusiasts unleashing the wild side of old C-Classes **Page 84**



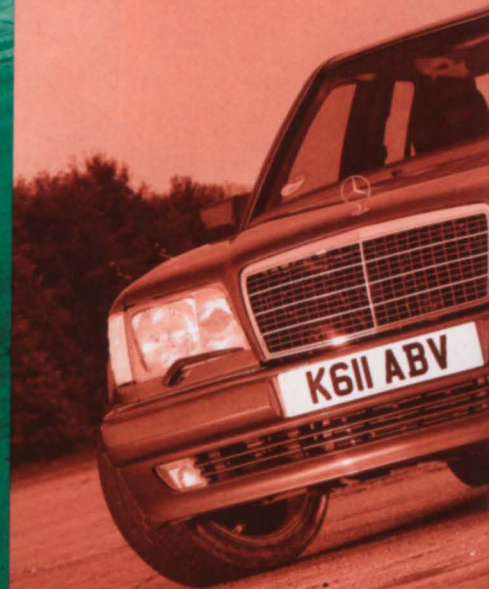


# CONTENTS

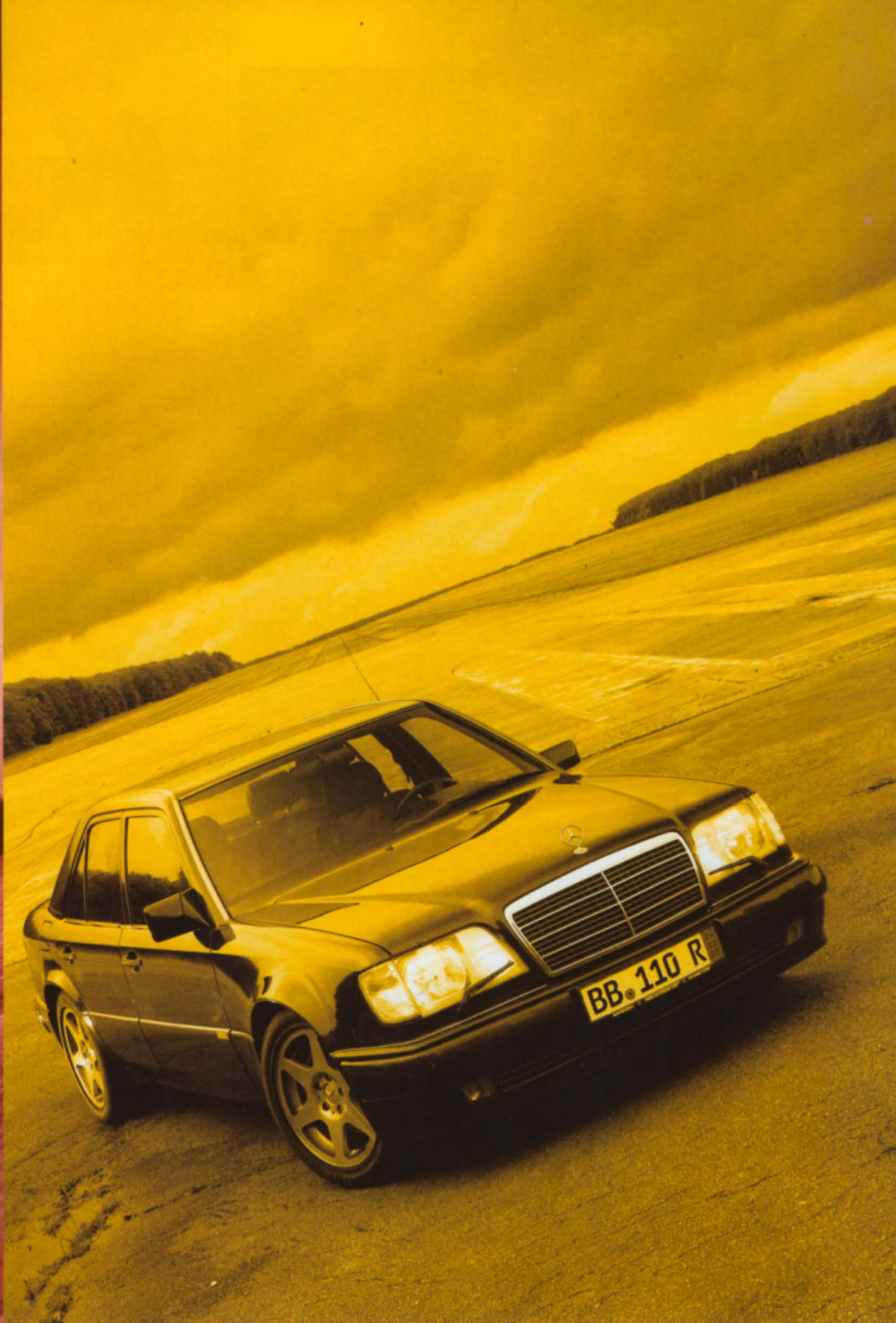
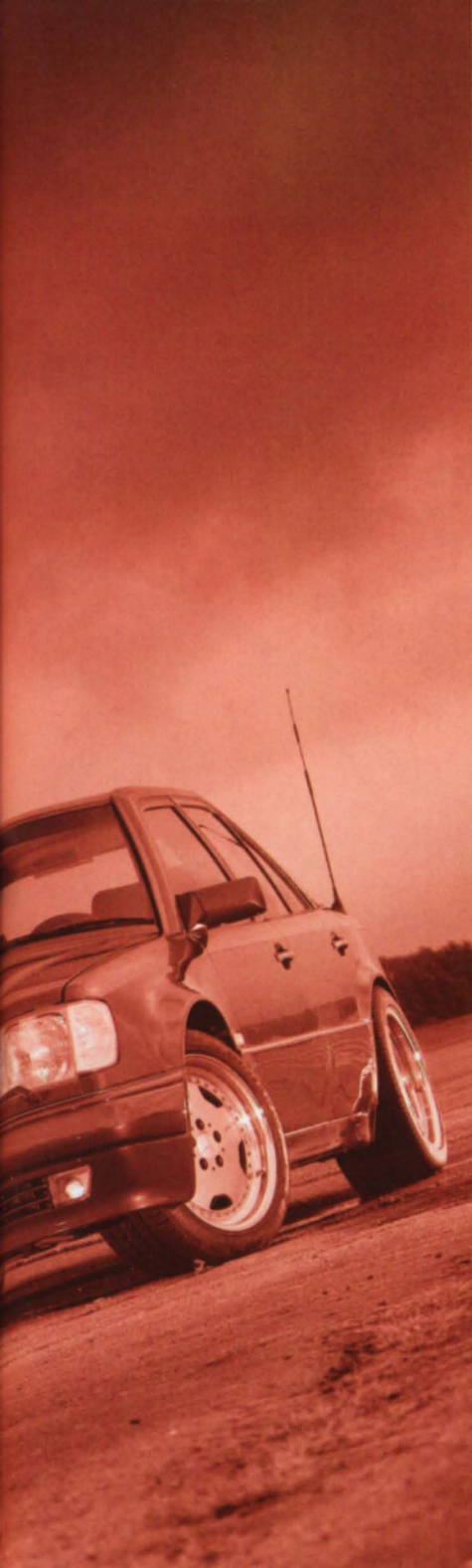


“Your life isn't going to be complete without the unique flowering from the cross pollination of Stuttgart's finest that is the 500E”

“Your life isn't going to be complete without the unique flowering from the cross pollination of Stuttgart's finest that is the 500E”



# THE RIGHT TIME



The Porsche engineered super E-Class has slipped out of obscurity and is now a bona fide classic, as we discover driving three prime examples back to back

WORDS TIM SLADE  
IMAGES CRAIG PUSEY

**F**ASHIONS CHANGE FROM DAY TO DAY. IN FACT THE ONLY CONSTANT in this life is change. And the theme tune to *Coronation Street*. Now and again one particular model will come to people's attention and for whatever reason group desire sets in. Of course desire gets expensive when shared, doubly so if you're talking cars. One car that has found a new following in the last year, for no better reason than it is one hell of a motorcar, is the 500E/E500.

Less than a year ago I had my first taste of the 500E (*Mercedes Enthusiast* November 2006). It lived up to its mighty reputation in no uncertain terms. In fact it blew my cotton socks off and no mistake. Perhaps I was a little too effusive in my praises and maybe my hosannas should have been more muted. Coming back to the real world, any belief that my writings could have had such effect on a model's values is more than likely something I should be explaining to my therapist. Nevertheless, 500E values have been heading skyward over the last year. As my crystal ball is currently away for astral tuning and a change of ectoplasm I can't tell you whether those values will rise, fall, or turn into a flock of white doves in the near future. However, if your life isn't going to be complete without the unique flowering from the cross pollination of Stuttgart's finest that is the 500E, it might be advisable to shake the moths from your cheque book pretty soon. ▷

“Why everybody wants one  
right now is because the sum  
of the parts adds up to a  
rather greater whole”



7 Left-hand drive only  
has traditionally limited  
appeal of the V8 W124.



courtesy of 500espot.com

▷ In some ways the 500E is not an obvious candidate for avarice. You're not going to impress the neighbours through the purchase of a middle aged, left-hand drive, four-door saloon. Mondeo man, or indeed simply modern car man, will never notice that those eight-hole alloys are wider than the similar wheels on most other W124s, or that the wheelarches have been subtly extended to cover the extra rubber. Only the little badge on the back might get him wondering, until the road opens out or you hit the dual carriageway when that badge is going to be too small to read at the speed it will be disappearing.

From where we are now it looks as though the needle between Mercedes and BMW has been going on ad infinitum. It isn't really so as BMW only started to offer what might have been considered genuine alternatives to Mercedes by the late 1970s. But by the second generation 5-Series of 1982 there were some versions that left Mercedes without a riposte. The quick and super quick M535i and M5 were mighty motors, and this was before AMG joined the family and Mercedes simply had nothing in the M car ball park. The E28 M5 was built in limited numbers, but with the introduction of the E34 M5 in 1989 there were no such restrictions. It was getting embarrassing. With 311bhp, and a 0-62mph time of 6.3 seconds it made the 300E, even in its new 24-valve form, look like an old man's car. It wasn't just a case of losing sales – Mercedes was losing face.

Mercedes had the engine for the job: the R129 500SL's 4,973cc, 32-valve, 322bhp V8. And to hit BMW where it hurts the body would have to be the W124 E-Class. Of course creating a supercar took rather more than an engine swap. ▷

**JUST THE FACTS**

**Mercedes-Benz 500E (W124)**

Engine	M119 4,973cc V8
Power	316bhp@5,600rpm
Torque	347lb ft@3,900rpm
Transmission	4-speed auto, RWD
Weight	1,710kg
0-62mph	6.1sec
Top speed	155mph
Fuel consumption	23.5mpg
Years produced	1991-1995

**OVERVIEW**

The prices of these subtle, practical powerhouses have risen markedly in recent months and with over 300bhp and neat handling it is easy to see why

Figures for 1993 500E, 1993 E500 and 1994 E500 Limited as pictured except post 03/94 cars weighed 1,730kg; top speed electronically limited; fuel consumption according to EEC 120km/h



◀◀ 316bhp and 347lb ft of torque in a W124 is quite a revelation.

◀◀ Lairy trim on Limited is an acquired taste but the cabin is otherwise solid.



▷ With an engine bay never intended for a V8 some serious revisions were in order. From the spec it sounds like a four-door 500SL. The 500SL is an excellent car and if the 500E were simply that it would be pretty good. Why everybody wants one right now is because the sum of the parts adds up to a rather greater whole.

The Paris Motor Show in October 1989 saw the unveiling of this unlikely monster. It was quicker than the M5, and looking at the current E34 M5 survival rate and values there is no doubt the Merc was put together a whole lot better. There wasn't much doubt in 1989 either. Perhaps the most surprising element was Porsche's involvement. The car's hand built nature meant it would have slowed Mercedes' production line so standard bodies were trundled across town to Zuffenhausen for Porsche to build them. They returned to Mercedes for paint, to Porsche for final assembly and to Mercedes for distribution. The human involvement means there are little differences. Put your hand under the wheel arch of any 500E and the return of the lip seems to be a different shape on every one. This slow process meant that although not a limited production car, numbers were limited simply by capacity.



△ Celebrated badge is finally starting to get the recognition it deserves.

△△ Cabin is typical high spec Mercedes but pace is in a different league.

Production never kept up with demand. 10,479 500E and E500s were built, including the very small number of E60 AMGs. There are three slight variations on the E500 theme and we've managed to get one of each together in one place. The place is Bruntingthorpe, and just in case the cars weren't going to impress you enough on the road, a couple of blasts around Brunters' bumpy concrete should bring you round.

#### SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

We have a 1993 500E in blue black metallic which is cheating a bit as it blows through a hand made Hayward & Scott exhaust system. Then there is the E500 from later in 1993, resplendent in the rare shade of Almandine Red. With the period 17-inch AMG split rims it isn't quite the shrinking violet most of these cars are. It too has an aftermarket exhaust, though less rampant than the 500E's. The Limited is from 1994. These were the last 500 built and included a few extras whose boxes had to be ticked on earlier cars. The strangest feature of any Limited is its interior with a horrible colour effect on the centres of the Recaro seats and the door cards. Blue-black cars had grey and green, silver ▷

“ Turn in is sharp for such a big car, and for a perfectly civilised road car the track handling is quite a surprise ”



▷ had grey and red. The effects are on Roser leather, which doesn't wear anything like as well as the standard stuff. Nasty, but desirable. To make up for it Limiteds wear the 17-inch wheels that also appeared on the 190E Evo IIs. Gorgeous. Aftermarket exhausts are plainly the thing for the 500Es, as this one wears a rorty sounding Eisenmann example.

The Bruntingthorpe straight is two miles long, and from a standing start it isn't hard to hit 250km/h (155mph), before placing a good deal of trust in those big vented brakes. That's about where the speed limiter cuts in. Without it you could hit 178mph, on a longer straight! Turn in is sharp for such a big car, and for a perfectly civilised road car the track handling is quite a surprise. There's no understeer, but I can't really comment on oversteer. There's a clever ASR traction control system, and you can't help wondering if it might have been the legal department that persuaded the engineers not to fit an off button. The car steps out a couple of inches and then the throttle is lifted to bring it back in. On a bumpy corner it can do this 10 times. You soon realise you can leave your foot flat on the floor through a corner and let the ASR do the driving.

The pace is impressive, but there's no way to play to the gallery. Standing starts are also regulated. Pulling the gear lever into bottom and then putting it back in D gets you off the line in first gear. It makes for a hell of a launch, but there's no tyre smoke and burn outs are banned by the electronics.

A little familiarity leaves no questions about these cars' current popularity. Except for why it's taken so long for everybody to catch on. When it comes to values the Limited is the most sought after and a little pricier than the others. There isn't much between the 500E and E500. Value is all about condition and history. Mileage is a moot point. These are big Mercs with odometers that will go to very big numbers without any apparent effect on performance or feel. Just so long as its history proves regular maintenance. Most of the cars in this country came from Germany, where they all clocked up a few kilometres. Jon Aucott had to go there for this Limited and if you want one you might have to do the same. The only question left is: why on earth didn't I buy one a couple of years ago? 📌

► Thanks to *Jon Aucott at Avantgarde* for the cars  
Tel 07968 694448 Web [www.avantgardecars.co.uk](http://www.avantgardecars.co.uk)

“ These odometers will go to very big numbers without any apparent effect on performance or feel ”



△△ Wider front track and blistered arches one of the only visual clues.

△ Q-car looks helped by standard looking (but wider) alloys.

