



The Mercedes-Benz 600



Mercedes-Benz



The majestic car

The Ardennes in Belgium, August 28, 1963: ten international motor journalists were at last introduced to the new large Mercedes limousine, the Mercedes-Benz 600, which had been awaited with great suspense. An exorbitantly luxurious car, designed, as rumor had it, to outclass everything that had been available to ambitious customers all over the world in the category of top-notch limousines.

It is impossible to express in one sentence what the gentlemen felt when the shrouds were withdrawn. They saw a rather conservatively styled car whose clear lines, without any frills but still representative, had an excitingly new and yet somewhat familiar appeal.

There is the front and rear panoramic glazing, faintly reminiscent of the tailfin sedans, a roof that seems to hover above

high side windows, and an interior compartment flooded with light. The headlamps, foglamps and indicators, all vertically arranged behind a common glass cover, quote the 300 SL roadster; the steep radiator mask with its lateral air intakes is reminiscent of the 180, the first Mercedes with self-supporting bodywork. The rear-light units and the double bumper corner elements front and rear are also typical

Mercedes features. Symbols which went down in history and continue to live on, symbols of the unmistakable Mercedes form language, merged into a new synthesis.



"Climb in. Everything is as before, only completely different."

This comment, made not without pride, is attributed to the fathers of the Mercedes-Benz 600 which exudes distinction and luxury in every respect. Chief Engineer Dr. Fritz Nallinger and his highly ingenious team, Rudolf Uhlenhaut, Josef Müller and Karl Wilfert, had been assigned the task of designing a new Grand Mercedes, a large touring and representative car.

This car was to represent the skills of the best design engineers, technicians, stylists and interior appointment designers, with no regard to costs. Imagination was not only permitted – it was demanded in this noble competition of talents. From 1956, the men and women in the development

team tackled the new challenge with enthusiasm. According to Fritz Nallinger, the 600 became the "engineers' playground". Long, broad and commanding respect – that was how the car presented itself in 1963, opening up a new dimension of motoring in a new, hitherto unknown style.

The length of the "normal" sedan version is 5450 millimeters, that of the Pullman 6240 millimeters. A width of almost two meters suggests space in abundance. The car's height, at 1500 millimeters, baffles people because it's really low for a car of this type. But the impression is deceptive: when you climb into the car, you are instantly given a new feeling of wellbeing and wide expanses. And where height is concerned, occupants are able to keep their hats on. But what is that? The door, initially only closed to, is shut, as if by magic, with a gentle sighing sound. The automatic closing aid has done its job.

This is the first encounter with the hydraulic system, spanning the car like a network and serving exclusively the purpose of enhancing comfort. It operates the locks of

doors, trunk lid and tank flap; it raises and lowers the seats, moves them forward and backward and adjusts the backrest – if required down to the fully reclining position. In the rear, the hydraulics control the seats' fore-and-aft adjustment and the backrest angle. They open and close the steel sunroof and lower and raise the door windows. Even the trunk lid, the aerial, the flaps of the electronically controlled heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems are equipped with hydraulic aids which perform their jobs discreetly and noiselessly. Back in 1963 it took some time to grasp this abundance of functions, this completely new level of operating comfort.

Just relax and adjust the seat – easy, but there is something else: adjusting the steering wheel! The ribbed chromium ring

around the padded boss in the center of the safety steering wheel is not just a decorative item but also has a function. Turn it to the left and it unlocks the steering wheel; it can now be vertically adjusted to the driver's needs. Turn it to the right and it retains its new position.

Now move the selector lever of the standard automatic transmission into "Drive" position and release the parking brake. But where? The driver looks for a parking brake lever in vain; there's merely a button in the dashboard which the driver could press to release the foot-operated parking brake. But he doesn't have to; it is released automatically when the car starts off. So off you go!



Synthesis of dynamism and comfort

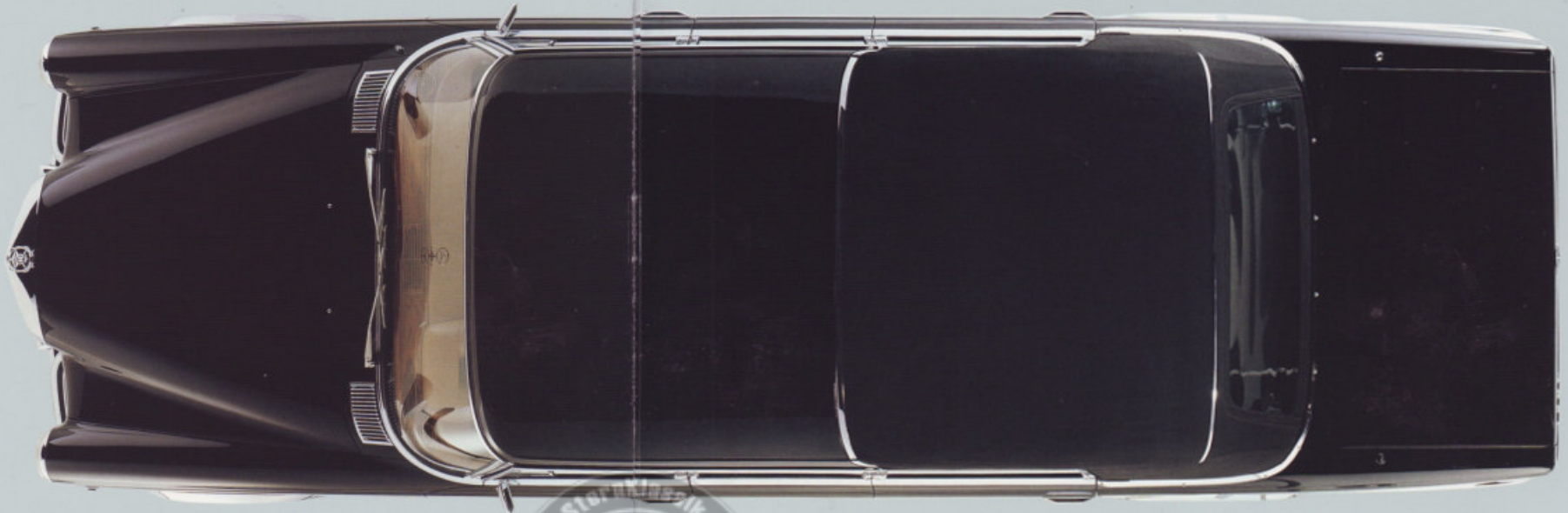
Up to that point in time, the motor journalists were used to large and heavy cars being rather stolid when it came to handling. Hence they asked themselves why in the whole wide world the press department had selected a winding mountainous course for trial-driving. The 600 was, after all, a car designed for long-distance travel, for quiet cruising.

What a surprise! As the journalists got used to the car and rising speeds, their anticipation of the next bend grew. The limousine, being anything but light, corners in a style that would do credit to a fully-fledged sports car, as if dynamic driving – and nothing else – were its realm, supported in almost playful manner by the high-pressure power steering.

And the trial-driving journalists went completely berserk when they had the opportunity to put their feet down: the limousine easily completed the sprint from standstill to 100 km/h in ten seconds. The 600's top speed of over 200 kilometers per hour also testified to its outstanding caliber.

This performance does not come about by chance. The 600 is powered by a 250 hp engine, a 6.3 liter unit which develops its enormous maximum torque of 51 mkp at an engine speed as low as 2800 revolutions per minute. And thanks to manifold injection, it does this so elegantly, effortlessly and quietly that neither interior nor exterior noise levels are anything to go by in guessing at the engine's enormous power. The 600 set new standards in its day and age with its independent wheel suspension, the air suspension whose shock absorbers were adjustable on the move – needless to say hydraulically, the level adjustment, the four compressed-air assisted disc brakes, with two calipers per wheel at the front.

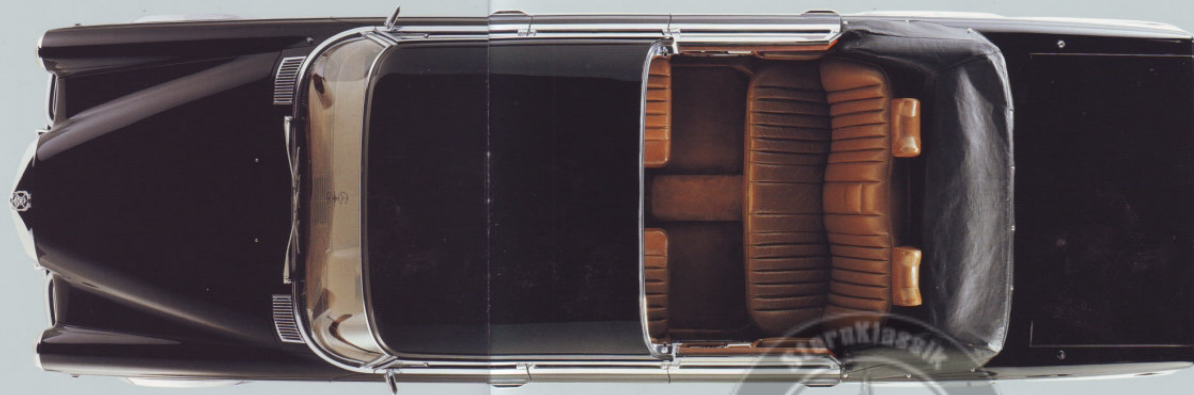
Indeed, the car incorporated everything the latest engineering had to offer at the time and that Mercedes-Benz had developed with a view to the future – also in terms of safety because that angle had certainly not been neglected by the Mercedes engineers. Mercedes-Benz had presented the “best car in the world”, as the journalists wrote a few days after the launch. The synthesis of comfort and dynamism received enthusiastic praise – as a manifestation of the future of the automobile.



Exclusiveness for individualists

The eagerly awaited new, large Mercedes-Benz made its first public appearance in grand style at the Frankfurt International Motor Show in September 1963. The 600 was instantly accepted by the world market – i.e. the potential, highly demanding clientele – as a competitive car because it surpassed the relevant international competition by a wide margin. It became one the most exclusive cars in the world, and over and above this it boosted the image of the German motor industry, from which exports benefited in their entirety.





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Now everything depended on the customers. And they flocked to the sales outlets – if this expression is permitted given their exclusive status. Crowned European heads and rulers of emirates on the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia, statesmen and presidents in Europe, overseas and the Far East, musicians like Herbert von Karajan and Mireille Mathieu, actors like William Holden, bankers, industrialists and playboys ranked among the buyers, but also individualists who simply wanted to call the best car in the world their own.

Right from the start of production in 1964 – to customer specifications exclusively – the word "standard" simply did not occur. This applied to the paintwork as much as to the interior appointments. Every buyer gave his or her personal note to his or her 600, an indispensable element in the ordering process. There were no limits to the imagination: something that did not appear on the long list of options was individually procured.

The pleasure in personalization was given a free rein – but always with the maxim of exclusively using tasteful top-quality materials and outstanding workmanship. Where amenities like radio, phone, tape recorder or TV set were concerned, it was the order of the day to install new developments. There was no room for any kind of grandeur in the 600. But one or the other color combination, however daring it appeared, was what the customer wanted and received. Even if this meant that grass-green upholstery covers combined with pink carpeting. By comparison, things like cooled drinks compartments, folding tables in the front-seat backrests, partitions, intercoms, remote radio control and electric razors integrated in the rear armrest were run of the mill. The optional air conditioning had separate cooling circuits for the driver's and rear passengers' compartments – with cooling pads under the rear carpeting to ward off any heat radiated by the exhaust system. And it goes without saying that a special luggage set was available to make full use of the 580 liter trunk.

No stone remained unturned in fulfilling customer wishes, as demonstrated by the example of a very special one-off landaulet version with a short wheelbase, which was ordered by a paraplegic customer in 1967. The car was fitted with a device resembling the handlebars of a motorcycle and enabling the driver to control and drive the 600 solely with his hands.

It goes without saying that the emphasis was on the Pullman and Pullman/landaulet versions. They were available with four or six doors, with or without partition, with seats arranged vis-à-vis or in two rows one behind the other, with individual chairs or folding seats or anything else (two beds for instance), and as a landaulet with a retractable fabric soft-top above the rear seats in a particularly exclusive version.

The landaulet was particularly popular as a representative car with governments and heads of state, enabling them to receive the crowds' ovations on official occasions, individually or together with their guests.

Today, armored limousines unfortunately have to be used predominantly on such occasions, but it goes without saying that armored versions of the 600 were also available, at the special request of "endangered" potentates like Leonid Brezhnev, Mao Tse-tung and quite a few others.

The most famous landaulet was supplied to the Vatican and used to drive Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II around. Its special feature was the single chair installed in the rear, and this chair could be raised hydraulically to move His Holiness into the view of the faithful.



Technical data Mercedes-Benz 600/ 600 Pullman, 1963 - 1981

General data	600	600 Pullman
Wheelbase	3200 mm	3900 mm
Front/rear track	1587/1581	1587/1581
Dimensions L x W x H	5450 x 1950 x 1500 mm	6240 x 1950 x 1510 mm
Turning circle	approx. 12.7 m	approx. 14.6 m
Unladen weight	2600 kg	2770 kg
Perm. gross weight	3050 kg	3340 kg
Top speed	207 km/h	200 km/h
Acceleration 0 - 100 km/h	approx. 10 seconds	approx. 12 seconds
Fuel consumption (DIN)	17.8 liters (premium)	18.2 liters (premium)
Fuel tank/reserve	112/19 liters in the rear	112/19 liters in the rear

Engine:

Daimler-Benz M 100 V8 injection engine (90° V angle)
 Displacement: 6330 cm³
 Bore x stroke: 103 x 95 mm
 Output: 250 hp at 4000/min
 Torque: 51 mkp at 2800/min
 Compression ratio: 1 : 9.0
 Mixture formation: Eight-plunger injection pump with intermittent manifold injection, automatic choke and warm-up
 Valves: Overhead, two per cylinder, one camshaft per row of cylinders, driven by one duplex chain each

Power transmission:

Rear-wheel drive, locking differential
 Clutch: Hydraulic
 Transmission: Four-speed automatic
 Ratios: 1st 3.98, 2nd 2.46, 3rd 1.58, 4th 1.00, R 3.23
 Axle ratio: 3.23

Running gear:

Self-supporting all-steel bodywork
 Front axle location: Double wishbones
 Front axle suspension: Air bellows and additional rubber springs, anti-roll bar
 Rear axle location: Single-joint swing axle, thrust arms
 Rear axle suspension: Air bellows with level adjustment and additional rubber springs, anti-roll bar. Hydraulic shock absorbers front and rear, adjustable on the move
 Brakes: Hydraulic dual-circuit brake system with compressed-air assistance, four brake discs with two brake callipers on each front wheel; mechanical foot-operated parking brake acting on the rear brake discs, manually released or hydraulically released automatically when starting off
 Steering: Progressively acting recirculating ball-type power steering, steering damper
 Wheels: 6 1/2 J x 15 H
 Tires (tubeless): 9.00 H 15/6 PR or 225 HR 15

2,677 dreams come true

Between 1963 and 1981, a total of 2,677 units were produced of the Mercedes-Benz 600 - including 428 Pullman limousines, 59 landaulets and two coupe prototypes with a 220 millimeter shorter wheelbase. In 1964, a Mercedes-Benz 600 sedan with generous standard specifications was available at a price of DM 56,500/€ 28,888.

Prices of the Pullman started at DM 63,500/€ 32,467. At the time, this sort of money also bought an average detached house. Nevertheless, the prices quoted have to be seen as theoretical figures - fulfillment of virtually every individual wish converted every single unit into a unique car with its own price.





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