

CLASSIC DRIVER

Meet the king of the Gullwings - one of two surviving works competition Mercedes 300 SLs

Lead

The Mercedes 300 SL is among the most stunning and evocative sports cars of all time, and now you could own one of the most significant Gullwings ever made. Feast your eyes on one of just two surviving ex-factory competition 300 SLs.



Mercedes truly outdid themselves with the 300 SL, shocking the world with their stunning gull-winged sports car at the 1954 New York International Auto Show. The svelte two-seater stood out like a sore thumb from the marque's usual ultra-luxurious limousines that were so loved by world leaders. However, it turns out the mechanical know-how required to extract a comfortable ride from the slightly tattered surface of post-war Europe's roads also transferred neatly into making the world's fastest production car, which is exactly what the 300 SL was when it launched.



However, not all 300 SLs were made equal, in fact, just four of them were retained by Mercedes-Benz to be modified for competition use at the request of racing engineer and ex-Formula One racer, Karl Kling, and the chief of Mercedes' 'Sportabteilung' racing department, Alfred Neubauer. Only two of those cars remain in existence today, and this

beautiful piece of automotive sculpture is one of them. [Offered for sale with DD Classics](#), this is your chance to acquire one of the most significant Mercedes race cars of all time.



Chassis #198.040.5500819 rolled off the production line on October 31st 1955 and was delivered to Mercedes Benz Dortmund to be used as a display model. Finished as you see it today in its original colour combination of Silver-Grey Metallic coachwork with Blue checked Gabardine, Blue trim, and Rudge road wheels, it must have looked like an alien spacecraft to the people of Dortmund. Unsold, the car returned to the factory on February 1st 1956, where it was transferred to the 'Sportabteilung' department as requested by Neubauer. This is where its metamorphosis began.



Clearly Neubauer wasn't waiting around, because a day later, on the 2nd of February 1956, a new factory build sheet was issued with 16 mechanical upgrades intended to help this Gullwing outdo the competition in the 1956 European Rally Championship. Included among these upgrades was the installation of a sports camshaft and sports springs and dampers, while the entire braking system was updated too. The exhaust hanger was reinforced, and fog lights supplied by Bosch were fitted along with stone guards for all headlights. A passenger headrest, a wide spare wheel in the back of the car, and two jacks were also added among other upgrades, leaving this 300 SL ready to dominate Europe's Rally stages.



With a highly potent race car in his hands, all Neubauer needed was a suitably potent driver and navigator to match, which he found in the form of Walter Schock and Rolf Moll. Born in Stuttgart-Wangen, Schock found himself in Daimler-Benz's test department following a mechanic's apprenticeship with the company. His first sports start would come in 1954 at the Rally Solitude, guided by his teammate-to-be Rolf Moll. Throughout the years, Schock would go on to rack up a number of wins and prizes thanks to his driving skills. Meanwhile, Rolf Moll, a mechanical engineer with a gift for navigation, seemed to be Schock's ideal co-driver. In time, the combination of the two men with their rapid, yet reliable Gullwing would prove to be extremely competitive.



Neubauer must have felt confident at the start of the 1956 European Rally Championship, but surely even he couldn't have predicted how successful his team would soon be. However, at the Rally del Sestriere conditions couldn't have been worse for the powerful, rear-wheel-drive Merc, as a heavy helping of snow seriously threatened Schock and Moll's chances. Despite the odds, they would go on to be outright class winners, something they would replicate at the gruelling 1,650 mile Rally Acropolis in Greece.



Returning to Western Europe for the Rally Wiesbaden in Germany, Schock and Moll would strike gold yet again. Clearly the two men had an insatiable appetite for victory, because they'd find the top spot on the podium once more at the 1,100 Mile Rally Geneva. Up next was the Wiesbaden Rally. Held between the 20th and 24th of June 1956, this behemoth of a rally was yet another test for both human and machine: over 1,750 hard-fought miles, including speed tests at the Nürburgring, Hockenheim, and Monthéry, and hill climbs in Belgium and Luxembourg. As strenuous as it sounds, Schock and Moll were more than up to the task, finishing 9th place overall and first in the unlimited-capacity Grand Touring class with their trusty Gullwing. The last event on the calendar for the Gullwing was the Rally Adriatic Yugoslavia, where the duo continued their winning streak, finishing first in class. At this point, they had racked up 39 points, enough to win them both the International and European Rally Championships.



During its previous ownership, prior to DD Classics' acquisition of the car, this Gullwing was stored and maintained exclusively by Mercedes Benz Classic, Stuttgart, where every inch of the car was scrutinised by their experts. The car is accompanied by a 97-page Expertise report confirming all aspects of vehicle, plus build letters and internal memos signed by Alfred Neubauer and Karl Kling and the cars entire running history from 1956 to present day. Starting in 2018, Mercedes Benz Classic carried out a two year long mechanical restoration which saw the engine removed, stripped, and rebuilt to the highest possible standard. Mahle aluminium forged pistons were installed, while the gearbox was also totally overhauled and refreshed. As you might imagine, this is but a fraction of the work done to get the car to its current immaculate state.



Any Mercedes Gullwing would occupy the top spot in 99% of the world's car collections, but this example is in an entirely different echelon of historical significance and desirability. Aside from this example, the only [other remaining factory 'Sportabteilung' car is the first of the four that were built](#), which won the Coppa Intereuropa and was driven by Stirling Moss in the 1956 Tour de France Automobile. As the recent 140 million dollar sale of the 300 SLR Uhlenhaut Coupé will no doubt have renewed many collectors' interest in Gullwings, the opportunity to add this stunning race-winner to your collection is one we certainly wouldn't pass up. So if you're looking for a true show-stopper, [get in touch with DD Classics](#).

Photos by Tom Shaxson

Gallery

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