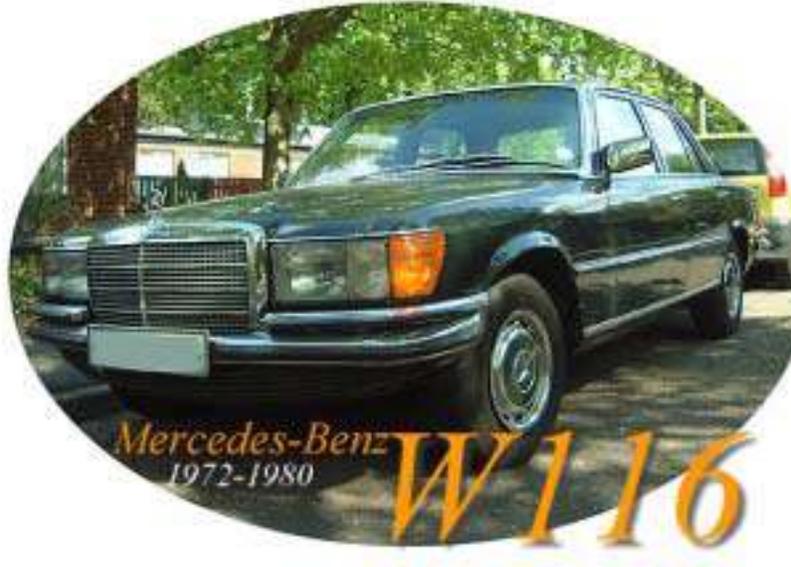


## The First of the Finest

by Christian Wimmer, European Photography Editor



As the owner of a W126 Mercedes-Benz S-Class who often references the car in these pieces, you would probably be astonished to hear that my favorite S-Class is not the W126.

You read that right. While the W126 is a gorgeous car, I have always had a strong fascination with the model before it: the W116.

Please don't misunderstand me. I think that the W126 S-Class is a beautiful, elegant automobile, but there is something about the design of the Mercedes W116 S-Class that attracts me to it.

In a way, it is hard for me to explain my love for the W116, as I have had a liking for it since I first saw one. It may be the design; it could be the fascinating 450SEL 6.9 *über-sedan*, or it may just be the simple fact that the W116 is one of the least admired and respected Mercedes-Benz. Maybe I sympathize with it.

Whatever it is, the W116 is my desired S-Class and, because of that, I thought I'd tell you a little bit about her!



## The W116

It all started in 1972. In September of that year, Mercedes-Benz premiered their new S-Class: the W116. It came into being during a time when fuel prices were soaring



and emission regulations were becoming stricter, particularly in North America. Big engines in big cars were soon considered a social crime, and a trend developed toward smaller cars with smaller engines.

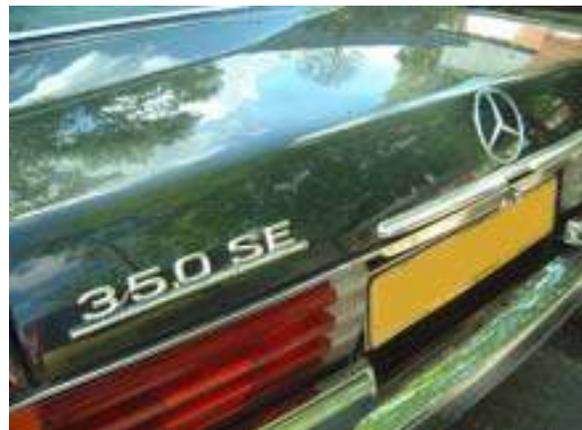
W116 was a big step for Mercedes, for it would lead a revolution that was to affect all Mercedes cars coming after it. The name *S-Class* had the honor of premiering in the W116 and, from then

on, the top of the line Mercedes sedan would be known as an *S-Class*.

The W116 brought forth a new styling era for Mercedes. Contrary to its predecessor, W108, the W116 featured a design statement that was to become synonymous with Mercedes styling: *conservatism*.

Indeed, the design was very unadventurous, with Mercedes aiming for a car that could merge into the flow of traffic without attracting too much attention. This was exactly what some people wanted: a car not too ostentatious but, at the same time, having a mildly upscale elegance to it.

The front of the W116 featured a central wider grille compared to the previous narrow grilles so favored by the Swabians. The long rectangular lights were to become a Mercedes styling cue until the mid 1990s. Careful attention was paid to front aerodynamics, which can be seen in the slanted and shaped underside body under the front bumpers.



At the rear, Mercedes introduced longer rectangular lights, which like the front lights, were to become a styling cue of the company for latter models. In spite of these revisions, the car was not exactly a *stunner*; but customers of the era liked it, and it sold well.

The W116 started the white-letters-on-black-background-with-an-orange-needle speedometer tradition, which lasted until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many people saw the interior as a step backward because of the use of dull plastic and the lack of chrome. The previous W109 possessed an interior that was filled with chrome, and had fewer plastics, giving it a certain *olde-worlde* charm.

No, Mercedes was not cost-cutting. Back then, Mercedes-Benz did not care at all about production costs since they could sell every car they made. The magic word was, once again, *conservatism*. The new direction Mercedes was taking, as mentioned earlier, was to take effect on all models following the W116. It is no wonder that the Mercedes' of the 1980s and early 1990s had essentially the same exterior and interior style: boxy, yet elegant, on the outside... and high-quality plastic with wood in the interior.

W116's interior did, however, feature something completely new and advanced for the period: safety. The dashboard and steering wheel were heavily padded, and were deformable in case of impact.



Picture courtesy of [Mercedes Enthusiast](#)

Perhaps one of the W116's strongest points was its safety. The W116 was the first Mercedes to feature safety oriented thinking in the design of the car. This means that crucial and easily damageable parts of the car were relocated to positions on the body where there was a relative safety from damage in most accidents. The fuel tank for example was positioned above the rear axles. Previously, Mercedes' fuel tanks were located at the rear of the car, where they were vulnerable to rear end crashes. The doors of the W116 were also strengthened with door pillars and tougher steel. There was also an enhanced roof frame should a W116 be involved in an accident where it could flip on its roof. The car also received anti-lock brakes as a good measure but this occurred later on in the W116's lifetime. More? The rain gutters on the front of the windshield were designed

to reduce the amount of water flowing over the screen. This may have appeared to be a trivial detail but proved to be a help in the end for safe driving. It was such little details that enhanced Mercedes' reputation for building safety-oriented cars. The rear lights of the W116 featured a ribbed design, which apart from fitting the car, have been proven to reduce the dirt that could accumulate on the rear lights in bad weather driving. Seems trivial, Mercedes didn't think so.



Technologically, the W116 was also a very advanced car for its time period. The front suspension, for instance, featured double wishbones and coil springs - not to mention the super advanced self-leveling system of the 450SEL 6.9. At the rear, the suspension was modified to give the car more predictable handling by giving it a semi-trailing arm arrangement. This replaced the previous Mercedes swimming arm rear axle, which reached critical levels when the car was driven with extreme vigor. The suspension setup also provided a great deal of comfort: something that this car was designed and intended to offer.

Handling was good for its time, but these days, a W116 will be more of a disappointment. The steering is vague and lacks the precise feeling that most of us are used to. Thank the traditional Mercedes recirculating-ball steering system for that.



Mind you, it handles fine if driven slow and in limousine-style, but sporty driving was never the W116's strength and there is a lot of body roll in corners when driven hard. Even the mighty 450SEL 6.9, which could dust various

sports cars of the period and came closest to the ideal of great handling, does not leave much of a positive impression on you these days. Back then, the conduct of the W116 was considered impressive enough and owners did not complain.

The body roll, too, was the mark of a heavy car. On the positive side, though, the W116 earned points for its solid and tank-like build quality. In fact, the heavy weight often gave it an unfair advantage in accidents. Internally, the W116 along with the R107 SL were known as *Der Panzerwagen*: a testimony to their superb build

characteristic. As mentioned earlier, the design of the car was safety-oriented and, indeed, the W116 was one of the safest cars to travel in during this time.

In case you are wondering, all W116s came with power steering as standard. Lower-end Mercedes, usually in Europe, did not have this useful feature unless you paid *Aufpreis*. American-spec Mercedes have always enjoyed more useful standard equipment than European-spec Benzes.



In terms of engines, the W116 came with a somewhat small lineup of motors starting with the base 280S and ending with the infamous 450SEL 6.9. There was also a diesel W116 in the form of the 300SD Turbodiesel. However, the diesel W116 was only sold in North America, not Europe or elsewhere.

Unlike modern S-Classes, the W116 had a very small target market which did not call for offering more varied engine options to widen the appeal of the car. Mercedes knew exactly what type of people an S-Class appealed to in those days, and planned out the range accordingly.

## 280S

The 280S was the carbureted version of the fuel-injected equally base 280SE. In 1970s Europe, there was still a great distinction between a fuel injected and carbureted engine with the former being a luxury and the later being viewed as standard on most cars. Both the 280S and 280SE shared the same double overhead camshaft *M 110 V28* (280S) / *M 110 E28* (280SE) engine, the only difference being that the 280SE used a Bosch *D-Jetronic* system (replaced with Bosch *K-Jetronic* beginning in 1976); the 280S was carbureted using a *Solex 4 A 1* carburetor.

From a technical standpoint, the 280S was old news. The 2.8-liter straight-6 engine was a direct transplant from the previous W114 E-Class (1967-1976), where it was equally offered in carbureted or fuel-injected form. In the W116 280S, the engine achieved respectable performance times for a carbureted vehicle. Horsepower and torque remained the same at 160-hp and 226 Nm (167 lb/ft) respectively. Mercedes could proudly claim an *Autobahn*-storming top speed of 190 km/h (119 mph), and a 0-62 mph time of 11.5 seconds with the 4-speed manual car. The automatic took a little longer at a leisurely 13.5 seconds which, for the time period, was not too bad.

Fuel economy, on the other hand, was poor. Although the 280S was the lowest model in the W116 range, the 1.6-ton weight of the car resulted in the 280S guzzling down 15 liters or more of precious gasoline (15.6 mpg). This figure was acceptable in 1972, but 1973 was just around the corner.

At a price of DM 23,800, the 280S was an attractive alternative to the higher end models. It came standard with a 4-speed manual transmission, power steering and the 2.8-l engine was relatively lively for spirited driving. As was the case with Mercedes in

the 1970s (and later on as well), various useful appliances such as a second exterior mirror cost a hefty *Aufpreis* (extra cost). At the customer's request, a 5-speed manual could be installed as well as the characteristically smooth Mercedes 4-speed automatic with the option of floor or column shift. Column shift transmissions had by this time faded out of fashion and it was a mystery why Mercedes still offered it on all models except the 450SEL 6.9 and the 300SD Turbodiesel. A handful, to say the least, were produced with this option.

Air-conditioning was available but the magic word was *Aufpreis*: the action of forking over some heavy cash for this luxury: even in an S-Class. Windows were rolled down by hand in all models (except for the 450SEL 6.9 and 300SD Turbodiesel), but if you were lazy and handing over more money didn't matter, pay extra and your windows could be operated at the flick of a button. Don't you miss the '70s?

The 280S was the second most popular W116 with 122,848 being produced from August / September 1972 to July 1980. Most were sold to private buyers who bought the car for the comfort; the cruising ability or, simply, because it was a Mercedes.



### 280SE / 280SEL

The *E* in 280SE/ SEL stood for *Einspritzung* (injection) and hinted at the cars use of a fuel-injected engine: a luxury in 1970s Europe, as mentioned previously. The 280SE models were a more expensive and powerful

alternative to the lethargic 280S models, and so the 280SE/ SEL wins the award for being the most popular W116 with a total of 150,983 280SEs and 7,032 280SEs being sold in its 8-year production run. It is interesting to note that most of the SEL models were sold as fleet cars to businesses, while the 280SE was sought by private buyers willing to spend a little more for power and speed. The 280SEL models also proved hugely popular with German government officials as well as in some Asian markets.



Yet the 280SE was merely an incremental improvement over the 280S. Employing the same engine, but with fuel injection and an OHC design, a 280SE/ SEL managed 185-



horsepower and 238 Nm of torque (176 lb/ft), doing the 0-62 mph sprint in 10.5 seconds (12.5 for the automatic model). Top speed only increased by 10 km/h to a final mark of 200 km/h (125 mph). Nonetheless, minor differences like these meant a lot in this period and many people gladly paid the DM 25,530 for a 280SE. The 280SEL cost DM 31,698; a 200-hp V8 350SE cost DM 28,860! Some people really do buy their cars for that extra legroom in the rear!

Fuel injection did little to quench the thirst of the 280SE / SEL, with the model returning similar fuel economy as the 280S. But for

many, it was the livelier and more rev-happy fuel-injected engine that was well worth the money over the 280S. Fuel injection was something to brag about in 1970s Germany.

In early 1976, the 280SE models received a Bosch *K-Jetronic* fuel injection system. The reason behind this was partly due to the change from leaded gasoline to unleaded gasoline in Germany, but mainly because of new emission laws in Europe. The standard *D-Jetronic* system worked well with leaded fuel, but was nothing but trouble when having to deal with unleaded gas. Performance suffered and fuel economy worsened.

Sadly, the *K-Jetronic* killed off 8 horses for a final total of 177-hp. Intriguingly, two years later in 1978, Mercedes was able to refine the *K-Jetronic* fuel injection to produce the necessary 185-horsepower which the 280SEs so needed.

Both the 280S and the 280SE models were produced at the same time starting in August, 1972 and ending in July, 1980. The 280SEL models first appeared in October, 1973, and production ended two months before the 280S and 280SE models were discontinued.



### 350SE / 350 SEL

With the 350 models, the real fun began. Customers at this level were quite serious about prestige and power. The 350s proved to be better suited for a mix of both power and cruising, being smoother and more refined than their smaller 6-cylinder brothers.

It can be said that the 350 models were aimed a sporty drivers because of the powerful engine and the standard 4-speed manual transmission, which worked better in enthusiastic driving than the optional 3-speed automatic. However, Mercedes was cursed with not being able to produce a decent manual transmission. The 4-speed stick shift may have offered more fun, but some of that fun quickly disappeared since the transmission was so clunky. It lacked smoothness and precision, and was not even worth comparing to other manual transmissions of the period. During my W116 research, I came across two British W116 owners who bought their cars second-hand and seem to think that the 3-speed and 4-speed automatics in their 350SE and 280SE suit the car better.



The 350 models featured a 3.5-liter V8 engine that started at 200-hp (later detuned to 195-hp, then rejuvenated to 205-hp). As was the case with the 280 models, the V8 engine had seen duty in the previous W108 280SE 3.5/ 280SEL 3.5 (1970-1971/ 1971-1972) S-Class. The engine performed best at higher RPMs, especially with the manual transmission, and the 350SE could achieve a sub-10 second 0-62 mph time. The expensive automatic transmission actually outsold manual 350s, with more customers being interested in relaxed driving and cruising. The 3-speed automatic used a hydraulic clutch, and was available in floor or column shift position. For the period, it was considered an excellent transmission; by today's standards, it may seem a little slow.

350 consumption was rated at 13 liters/ 100 km (18 mpg), but this figure is a little too optimistic and unrealistic.

### **450SE / 450SEL**

The 450s enjoyed flagship status for some time before the mighty 6.9 came along. It was easily one of the best sellers in the W116 range, especially in SEL form, thanks to its alluring interior space and excellent *un-Mercedes-like* value-for-money trait. That's right... *value-for-money!* Compared to their competitors, the 450s were well equipped and more appealing overall. Automatic transmission was standard for one, and the 450s offered superb comfort because of a modified rear suspension which also had the side benefit of remaining stable during high speeds or kickdowns. Occupants felt little of these antics; by now, this level of comfort was a Mercedes trademark.

It was only available with that 3-speed automatic transmission (column or floor shift choice), which did quite well managing and using the power of the engine. The 450s were by no means blisteringly fast, but offered a high standard of luxury for their time.

The 225-horsepower, 4520cc V8 engine was a simple OHC design with 2-valves operating per cylinder. The same engine was also serving in the R107 SL roadsters and C107 SLC coupes. Buyers enjoyed the rev-happy and responsive qualities of the engine rather than the performance factor. 450s became slower when they received the Bosch *K-Jetronic* fuel injection system, but that did not deter buyers.

Indeed, despite the oil crisis, it sold surprisingly well. The 450SEL even won the *Car of the Year* award in 1973, at a time when big engines and big cars were frowned upon.

Things would get even worse (in terms of fuel consumption) with the model that was to be the pinnacle of the W116 range: the almighty 450SEL 6.9.

### **450SEL 6.9**

Mention the W116 to most people who know a little about cars, and the most likely response will be "*450SEL 6.9* ." Once the choice of Sterling Moss, it is indeed perhaps the most famous W116 S-Class, credited with fielding the largest production engine ever put into a Mercedes car... until the R129 SL73 AMG came along in the mid 1990s.

The 450SEL 6.9 was the top-of-the-line W116, signifying power and prestige in one package. Due to the oil crisis of 1973-1974, the introduction of this top-notch W116 was delayed until May 1975. From the very beginning, it was a very limited-production model whose high price was a second statement that this car was going to be bought by those with wealth.

On the 6.9, goodies such as an RPM gauge; electric windows for both front and rear passengers, and air-conditioning were standard. No need to pay extra in this case! Unlike other W116s, the 450SEL 6.9 could not be defined as Spartan. Rear leather seats were an option, interestingly enough.

The engine came from the previous top-of-the-line S-Class, the W109 300SEL 6.3 (1965-1972), and was bored-out amongst other modifications. This motor was one of Mercedes' most famous engines, having its origins in the infamous W100 Mercedes 600 Pullman (built from 1963 to 1981). Despite the 6.9 badging, the engine capacity was closer to 6.8-liters (precisely 6834cc). Horsepower was rated at 286 and torque

was an immense (and useful) 550-Nm @ 3000 RPM (406 lb/ft), which meant explosive power and acceleration.

Despite these figures, the 450SEL 6.9 lacked the instantaneous acceleration of its forbearer, the 300SEL 6.3. At fault was the heavy weight of the car, which was further burdened with the installation of safety devices: something that had been absent in the 300SEL 6.3. Incidentally, U.S-spec 6.9s were slower than Euro-spec version. Due to the US crash regulations of the time, W116s destined for North America were fitted with energy absorbing bumpers that were long and heavy (and ugly). These obviously added weight, and worsened handling considerably.

Mercedes had the nerve to claim a fuel consumption of 16 liters per 100 km (14.6 mpg). Contemporary testers never bested this claim. 6.9s were notorious gas-guzzlers, and figures between 20-25 liters per 100 km (11-9 mpg) are more realistic. For spirited drivers, the fuel mileage became drastically worse forcing owners to stop often and refuel the 96-liter fuel tank.

In spite of not being as quick as its predecessor, the 6.9 had a reputation as a sports car killer, meaning that it could give many a sports car of its day a run for their money. The sheer torque of the 450SEL 6.9 enabled it to enjoy quick midrange acceleration sprints, and reach its then-impressive top speed of 225 km/h (141 mph); again, consider that some sports cars of the day could not even attain such speeds!

A kickdown in a 450SEL 6.9's called on the enormous torque reserves of this car, causing it to veer slightly sideways and forcing the driver to correct constantly with the steering wheel. It was not that serious, but the 6.9 had a tendency to, shall we say, *go its own way* when pressed hard. Couple this to the vague, recirculating-ball steering system, and you had a car that has tremendous power, but could not really exploit it.

Nonetheless, the 6.9 remains a superb automobile even in this day and age, and is the highlight of the W116 range. It was produced only in LWB (long wheelbase) form, with a very small number of RHD cars made.

### **300SD Turbodiesel**

The 300SD was exclusively produced for the North American market, where it proved to be a huge success with 28,634 models reaching American soil despite a prohibitive price tag of \$25,000.

The CAFÉ (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) laws of the United States had called for automakers to reduce their fuel consumption to a fleet average of 27.5 mpg. The 300SD made history as being the first mass-produced turbodiesel sedan in the world, and was the first higher end Mercedes destined for export with a turbocharged oil-burner upfront.

Diesel engines in luxury cars were a Mercedes specialty. The Swabians had experience with this concept for decades in Europe, and now it was time to give the North American market some insight into what a diesel could do. The benefits of low-end torque and fuel economy were particularly stressed in period advertisements that were designed to generate interest in the car.

The 4-speed automatic transmission was tuned for a high-end top speed, itself academic in the U.S. The diesel W116 topped-out at 165 km/h, or 103 mph; quite a feat for a diesel back then. Such a speed could have been useful in Europe, but not in the United States.

The turbocharged diesel engine came from the W123 300D Turbodiesel. It was good for 115-horsepower and 231 Nm (170 lb/ft) of torque at an early (and useful) 2400 RPM. From these numbers, it is easy to see that the 300SD Turbodiesel was never going to break speed records. Then again, this car was made for cruising with fuel conscious buyers in mind - and that, the 300SD did extremely well.

Obviously, the diesel's advantage was fuel economy - and that, the 300SD Turbodiesel delivered. On average, the 300SD could achieve ratings between an optimistic 8 liters per 100 km, and a more realistic 14 liters per 100 km. Not bad... not bad, considering that the diesel W116 weighed a hefty 1815 kg. That is around 29.3 and 16.7 mpg respectively.

U.S-spec W116s looked very different from what the Europeans and the rest of the world were used to. The United States had a rule about bumpers withstanding impacts of up to 8 mph. Accordingly, Mercedes lengthened and strengthened the front and rear bumpers of W116s going for export to North America. These bumpers not only made the W116 heavier, but affected handling and as a result, American-spec W116s were the poorer cousins of their European counterparts. To make matters worse, there was also the issue of sealed-beam-lights, required on all cars in the United States. That, in case you were wondering, explains why American-spec W116s had those unattractive, small round lights upfront.

The fact that the 300SD was only made for the US market does not mean it was the only W116 offered in North America. The 450SEL 6.9 was eagerly awaited by the power-hungry Americans, and it made it over the Atlantic. The 450SEL was also sold in the U.S. for a while. Obviously, North America did not care about the 280s, and they were never even considered for export to North America.

However, the Americans were cutting back on their smog habits and U.S-spec W116s received horrific power cutbacks. To give you some idea of the difference, a U.S-spec 450SEL could be outpaced quite easily by a European-spec 350SEL. The Europeans enforced some of their own emissions laws, of course, but not as drastically as did the Americans.

## Final Thoughts

These days, the W116 may struggle to attract second glances from its surroundings. The W116 S-Class never quite made it as a classic.

The reasons behind this are countless. Arguably, the W116 was a very understated car; one which had presence, perhaps even a distinct presence, but with decidedly conservative lines nonetheless. Think of it as a car



that you see in traffic, do not think much of, but then decide to look back at it because something draws you to it. That is what the W116 styling does for me... I like it!

First and foremost, let us talk engines. While simple by today's standards, they are very reliable and well built. Things do go wrong from time to time, of course, and none of the W116's engines were ever known for fuel economy. This makes them impractical to run on a daily basis. With the high fuel prices we are experiencing these days, would you really want to own a W116?

By contrast, the W123 is such a popular old Benz because of its smaller size, relatively cheap running costs, and more engine choices (which of course get much better fuel economy than a base W116 280S could ever achieve). The W123 was also made with production numbers reaching well into the millions meaning that spare parts and services for these cars are more readily available.

Spare parts for your W116 can also be a problem, since W116s are a pretty rare find these days. Mercedes still offers some genuine spare parts that can be produced if ordered. Ordering them from the manufacturer is expensive, though, and with a little luck (and living in the right area), you'll be able to find the right parts from fellow W116s (if they have not been cannibalized already).

At nearly 5 meters in length (S/ SE models measure 4960 mm in length, SEL models measure 5060 mm), the W116 is a pretty considerable sedan. It is quite heavy too, with a base 280S tipping the scales at 1660 kg (1.6 tons).



If you are interested in buying a W116, the best model depends on your whereabouts and what models were sold there. North American readers shouldn't be too troubled about fuel consumption, and thus a 450SEL would be a decent choice.

The 450SEL 6.9 is a superb ride, but keep in mind that this thing sucks gas as if it were oxygen, and that it was extremely high tech for its time. Bottom line: things will go wrong and will place a heavy burden on your wallet. Spare parts for 450SEL 6.9s can be a problem. The advanced suspension of this model is troublesome to fix if broken. My tip: only let qualified Mercedes dealerships take a look at it.

The Turbodiesel model is a car for enthusiasts, even if some will consider it too slow and underpowered. 17 seconds to 62 mph was very respectable for a diesel sedan (weighing 1.8 tons!) back then. They are hard to start in colder climates, and are somewhat noisy (although they quiet down at cruising speeds). Perhaps, though, it

offers more of one thing – besides fuel economy - that the 450SEL does not: charm. If you are the kind of person who travels long distances, and who is seeking a big, classic cruising sedan with the three-pointed-star on the hood and decent fuel economy, then the 300SD is your choice.

Some 300SD Turbodiesels did make it back to Europe, or even elsewhere. During my time in the Philippines, it was not uncommon to see many North American-spec Mercedes cars; among them, a handful of diesel W116s. The last one I saw was in London, as it gently cruised by my 300SE during a late night drive. The badge at the rear clearly read *300SD Turbodiesel*, probably a case of an enthusiast importing one from North America.

The best W116 for someone living in an area with high fuel prices would be a later 280SE with a *K-Jetronic* fuel injection system. This model gets acceptable fuel economy, after the 300SD Turbodiesel.

Stay away from the manual transmissions. Aren't they more fun? Yes and no. Yes, because they are manuals; no because they are *Mercedes* manuals. Clunky and unrefined, they get on your nerves quickly and ruin what could otherwise have been a fun car to drive. Mercedes has always made exceptionally great automatics and, in my opinion, they also suit almost any Mercedes better than a manual. Thus, for any W116, an automatic would be the better choice. Let's be honest: a W116 is smooth and relaxed, rather than a track car for the purist.

All W116s can suffer from rust. These usually occur on the underbody and in areas under the bumper (front and rear) and the doors. Specialists can fix these, but it will be expensive.

Interiors were well put together and the materials are durable. While the cockpit may appear somewhat austere, it still manages to give the driver a feeling of well-being and comfort. In the 1970s, 'colder' interiors such as this were the trend. Cloth seats (European models) can be in a somewhat sad state if not taken care of. The same is true of the leather seats, which were optional on all W116s (except for the 450SEL 6.9 and 300SD Turbodiesel). A leather-cloth seat combination existed as well.

All in all, a W116 is a great car to own if you stand behind its well-being with devotion and enthusiasm. It is not a looker, but it provides you with the traditional Mercedes values of quality, comfort and safety. Be advised that owning a W116 will cost money. Things do go wrong on any older car.

In a way, the W116 is a very sad case. Here is a car that basically changed Mercedes from the 1960s by setting standards that were to come in the models after it, and that would turn the company into the manufacturer we knew until the mid-1990s.

Here, too, was a car that led its field in many important aspects – certainly, in safety and comfort; a car with tank-like build quality and excellent reliability.

This was a car made to make an impression and bring the company into a new age - a car made to redefine Mercedes-Benz.

Yet, in spite of that, it remains one of the least desired (and admired) Mercedes-Benz cars of all time.

If the W116 can feel emotions, I am sure it will be glad to know that it has one passionate supporter who happens to drive the model following it.



### Important Mercedes-Benz W116 S-Class Dates

<b>September 1972</b>	The Mercedes-Benz W116 is unveiled. At the beginning, there are three engine choices available: 280S, 280SE, and 350SE (LWB versions follow later)
<b>March 1973</b>	450SE & SEL versions are launched
<b>November 1973</b>	LWB 350SE is launched: the 350SEL
<b>April 1974</b>	The 280SEL debuts
<b>May 1975</b>	Mighty 450SEL 6.9 unveiling
<b>May 1978</b>	The 300SD Turbodiesel is launched for the North American market only
<b>September 1978</b>	The W116 makes headlines being the world's first car to be equipped with anti-lock-brakes
<b>September 1979</b>	The replacement for the W116 is unveiled: W126
<b>September 1980</b>	The last W116, a specially made 300SD Turbodiesel (production ended 1978), rolls off the production line in Mercedes-Benz's main plant in Sindelfingen, Stuttgart

**Technical Data W116 Range 280S – 300SD Turbodiesel***\*All Statistics Are Official Mercedes-Benz W116 Figures\****Mercedes-Benz W116 280S**

Mercedes Designation	W 116 V 28
Production Time	August 1972 – July 1980
Numbers Made	122,848
Price (German Marks)	DM 23,800
Engine	4-stroke 2746cc DOHC Inline-6 2-valves per cylinder gasoline engine (M 110 V28)
Power (hp)	160-hp @ 5500 RPM beginning 1976, 156-hp @ 5500 RPM
Torque (Nm / lb/ft)	226 Nm @ 4000 RPM (166 lb/ft) beginning 1976, 223 Nm @ 4000 RPM (164 lb/ft)
Compression	9 : 1
Acceleration (0-62 mph)	11.5 seconds
Top Speed (km/h / mph)	190 km/h (119 mph)
Average Fuel Economy (L per 100 km / mpg)	12.9 l / 100 km (18.2 mpg)
Fuel Supply Type	1 Double-Register Solex 4 A 1 carburetor
Transmission	4-speed manual, 5-speed manual (optional) or 4-speed automatic
Length x Width x Height (mm)	4960 x 1870 x 1425
Weight (Empty) in kg	1660 kg

**Mercedes-Benz W116 280SE / 280SEL**

Mercedes Designation	W116 E 28 (280SE) and V116 E28 (280SEL)
Production Time	August 1972 – July 1980
Numbers Made	150,983 (SE) and 7,032 (SEL)
Price (German Marks)	DM 25,530 (SE) and DM 31,698 (SEL)
Engine	4-stroke 2746cc OHC Inline-6 2-valves per cylinder gasoline engine (M 110 E28)
Power	185-hp @ 6000 RPM beginning 1976, 177-hp @ 6000 RPM beginning 1978, 185-hp @ 5800 RPM
Torque	238 Nm @ 4500 RPM (176 lb/ft) beginning 1976, 233 Nm @ 4500 RPM (172 lb/ft) beginning 1978, 240 Nm @ 4500 RPM (177 lb/ft)
Compression	8.7 : 1 (beginning 1978 9 : 1)
Acceleration (0-62 mph)	10.5 seconds
Top Speed (km/h / mph)	200 km/h (125 mph)
Average Fuel Economy (L per 100 km / mpg)	12.5 l / 100 km (18.8 mpg)
Fuel Supply Type	Bosch D-Jetronic fuel injection beginning 1976, Bosch K-Jetronic
Transmission	4-speed manual, 5-speed manual (optional) or 4-speed automatic
Length x Width x Height	4960 x 1870 x 1425 (SE) 5060 x 1870 x 1430 (SEL)
Weight (Empty) in kg	1660 kg (SE) or 1700 kg (SEL)

**Mercedes-Benz W116 350SE / 350SEL**

Mercedes Designation	W116 E 35 (350SE) and V116 E 35 (350SEL)
Production Time	August 1972 – September 1980
Numbers Made	51,100 (SE) and 4,266 (SEL)
Price (German Marks)	DM 28,860 (SE) and DM 33,933 (SEL)
Engine	4-stroke 3499cc OHC V8 2-valves per cylinder gasoline engine (M 116 E35)
Power	200-hp @ 5800 RPM beginning 1976, 195-hp @ 5500 RPM beginning 1978, 205-hp @ 5750 RPM
Torque	287 Nm @ 4000 RPM (212 lb/ft) beginning 1976, 275 Nm @ 4000 RPM (202 lb/ft) beginning 1978, 285 Nm @ 4000 RPM (210 lb/ft)
Compression	9.5 : 1 (beginning 1976, 9 : 1)
Acceleration (0-62 mph)	9.5 seconds (M/T), 10.3 seconds (A/T)
Top Speed (km/h / mph)	205 km/h (128 mph) (M/T), 200 km/h (125 mph) (A/T)
Average Fuel Economy (L per 100 km / mpg)	13 l / 100 km (18 mpg)
Fuel Supply Type	Bosch D-Jetronic fuel injection beginning 1976, Bosch K-Jetronic
Transmission	4-speed manual or 4-speed automatic
Length x Width x Height	4960 x 1870 x 1425 (SE) 5060 x 1870 x 1430 (SEL)
Weight (Empty) in kg	1725 kg (SE) or 1760 kg (SEL)

**Mercedes-Benz W116 450SE / 450SEL**

Mercedes Designation	W116 E 45 (450SE) and V116 E 45 (450SEL)
Production Time	December 1972 – June 1980
Numbers Made	41,604 (SE) and 59,578 (SEL)
Price (German Marks)	DM 33,966 (SE) and DM 38,573 (SEL)
Engine	4-stroke 4520cc OHC V8 2-valves per cylinder gasoline engine (M 117 E45)
Power	225-hp @ 5000 RPM November 1975, 217-hp @ 5000 RPM beginning 1978, 225-hp @ 5000 RPM
Torque	378 Nm @ 3000 RPM (279 lb/ft) November 1975, 360 Nm @ 3000 RPM (265 lb/ft) beginning 1978, 368 Nm @ 3250 RPM (271 lb/ft)
Compression	8.8 : 1
Acceleration (0-62 mph)	10.5 seconds (D-Jetronic) or 11.1 seconds (K-Jetronic)
Top Speed (km/h / mph)	212 km/h (132 mph) (D-Jetronic), 210 km/h (131 mph) (K-Jetronic)
Average Fuel Economy (L per 100 km / mpg)	14.5 l / 100 km (16.2 mpg)
Fuel Supply Type	Bosch D-Jetronic fuel injection Beginning November 1975, Bosch K-Jetronic
Transmission	3-speed automatic
Length x Width x Height	4960 x 1870 x 1425 (SE) 5060 x 1870 x 1430 (SEL)
Weight (Empty) in kg	1790 kg (SE) or 1825 kg (SEL)

**Mercedes-Benz W116 450SEL 6.9**

Mercedes Designation	V116 E 69
Production Time	September 1975 – May 1980
Numbers Made	7,380
Price (German Marks)	DM 69,930
Engine	4-stroke 6834cc OHC V8 2-valves per cylinder gasoline engine (M 100 E69)
Power	286-hp @ 4250 RPM
Torque	550 Nm @ 3000 RPM (406 lb/ft)
Compression	8.8 : 1
Acceleration (0-62 mph)	7.4 seconds
Top Speed (km/h / mph)	225 km/h (141 mph)
Average Fuel Economy (L per 100 km / mpg)	16 l / 100 km (14.6 mpg)
Fuel Supply Type	Bosch K-Jetronic
Transmission	3-speed automatic
Length x Width x Height	5060 x 1870 x 1410
Weight (Empty) in kg	1985 kg (with air suspension, 2025 kg)

**Mercedes-Benz W116 300SD Turbodiesel**

Mercedes Designation	W116 D30 A
Production Time	February 1977 – May 1978
Numbers Made	28,634
Price (United States Dollar)	\$ 25,000
Engine	4-stroke 2998cc OHC 5-cylinder turbocharged diesel engine with 2-valves per cylinder (OM 617 A)
Power	115-hp @ 4200 RPM
Torque	231 Nm @ 2400 RPM (170 lb/ft)
Compression	21.5 : 1
Acceleration (0-62 mph)	17 seconds
Top Speed (km/h / mph)	165 km/h (103 mph)
Average Fuel Economy (L per 100 km / mpg)	8-14 l / 100 km (29.3 -16.7 mpg)
Fuel Supply Type	Bosch 5-rotational pump & Garret exhaust turbocharger
Transmission	4-speed automatic
Length x Width x Height	5220 x 1870 x 1425
Weight (Empty) in kg	1815 kg

## Sources

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