



THE Ottawa Tri-Star

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In This Issue...

President's Message
P.2

Humans vs Robot Cars
P.3

2017 Events
P. 3

40 Yrs between
Convertibles
P.4

MB Dethrones BMW
P.5

Myth of Mega-
Horsepower
P.7

Classified
P. 8

THINKING OF SPRING

While we stay huddled in our cozy homes and try to stay clear of winter's chill, it is good to know that Spring is a scant few months away. Lately it would be easier to travel by dog sled rather than drive! For those who embrace winter with skiing, skating and enjoying the outdoors despite the cold, good for you. For those lucky enough to escape to warmer climes for a couple months, I am envious.

For most of us it is simply a case of surviving as best we can and holding on to the promise that the weather will eventually warm up.

In my case, every time I go through my garage I look longingly at my SL500 snuggled under its car cover with battery chargers glowing like small Christmas lights. Planning a few road trips for the summer seems to help brighten up the cold, dark days of winter.

The Club Executive is already starting to think about the next driving season and what sort of events will be held in 2017. We want to make this year a good one as Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary. We welcome any suggestions members have for events.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in the Spring!

Stay Warm and Drive Safe!



Mike McKinnon
Vice President &
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Message from the President

By Larry Lomas



I am relieved of the twice annual tire exchange

Last spring I did the unthinkable at least in the minds of some. I left my winter tires on knowing that they, having relatively softer rubber, would wear down faster on the hot summer road surface and of course the increased noise level would no longer be seasonal. In so doing I avoided the twice annual exchange, its cost, and the risk of a back injury as I drive a large ML320CDI SUV and the tire and rim combination is a heavy, bulky beast times four. Since 2008 winter tires have been mandatory for drivers in Quebec from 15 December to 15 March although one may get permission to switch back to summer/all season tires for extended driving below the Snow Belt during that period. The advantage of winter tires is that they generally perform better than snow tires and more importantly they provide better traction/braking on ice. Many Quebecers, including me, travelling in rural areas wore winter tires a few years before they were required. According to the Quebec

Ministry of Transport there was a 36% reduction in winter serious injury, including death, accidents in the first year. There was a 46% reduction of same in Montreal where winter tires use prior to legislation was minimal. Fines for residents not running these tires, having a mountain and snowflake molded into the



sidewall, during this period is \$200-\$300 and of course it does not apply to visitors. My four year old winter tires had an avg tread depth of 7.8 mm last spring and before our first snowfall it was only down to a surprising 6.3 mm avg. Much less wear than I had expected and well above the 4.8 mm min for safe winter driving on snow and ice. The contributing factors are, whereas while

working we had at one time, three cars and we are now down to one and it often sits in the garage unused for two to three days and our yearly travel total distance is between 16k -18k km. My main passenger has not complained of the now year round noise and as many of you know I have a hearing problem and wear aids. I will continue to monitor my tire nitrogen pressure, tread wear, and when their life has ended I will get a set of the new All Weather tires. Yes, these tires, not to be confused with All Season Tires, test results that I have seen are impressive in all areas of my concern including snow, ice, rain, and stopping distances. The noise level is better than I expected and it would be lower than what we now experience. So once I am rid of this bulky burden there will be more space in the garage for evermore and I will have less concern of body injury. By the way I prefer the aftermarket alloy rims over the MB originals so I will get rid of those as well.

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The Ottawa Tri-Star

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Human drivers will bully robot cars

By Russ Mitchell
LA Times

Dietmar Exler, chief executive of Mercedes-Benz USA, is often asked why it's taking so long to develop self-driving cars.

It's not technology, he tells them. That's advancing fast.

It's not insurance and liability issues. "I do believe in lawyers," he said. "I'm a lawyer myself. We will solve these issues out."

It's not customer acceptance. As soon as someone rides in a car that can drive itself in bumper-to-bumper traffic, a convert is created, he said. "Who would argue that it's fun to be out on the 10 between 5 and 6 p.m. on a weekday? "The real issue," he said, "is humans." The coexistence of human drivers and robot cars, to be precise. It's not clear yet how well that will go.

Speaking at AutoConference LA, an

event that runs at the same time as the L.A. Auto Show and that is co-hosted by J.D. Power and the National Automobile Dealers Assn., Exler said even if completely driverless cars were available now, they'd be sharing the road with traditional cars for 20 to 25 years.

Some people are afraid of robots taking over. Exler is worried that humans will "bully" driverless cars.

Human drivers already speed, drive erratically and cut in line. Driverless cars will be programmed to be polite and follow the law.

When someone tries to cut in line at a traffic merge, humans won't let them in. But a driverless car will be programmed to stop when it sees an obstruction — like a line cutter. "They'll look for the autonomous car and that's where they'll cut in," he said.

Theoretically, robot cars could be programmed to be more aggressive, but he doubts regulators would allow that to happen.

Still, Mercedes-Benz is moving full speed ahead on semi-autonomous and driverless cars. The company was worried that its customers, who tend to love driving nice cars, would resist. Market testing showed otherwise. Exler talked about a 72-year-old SLS AMG owner. He said he'd never use driverless technology because it would be "boring."

But when he got a ride in a driverless S500 Mercedes in a Silicon Valley test zone, his response, according to Exler: "I will buy this car right now. How much do you want for it?"

2017 Events so far and more to follow

By Larry Lomas

BMCO Lunch 24 Jan @Army Officers Mess

Business casual, no jeans and no tie required although many wear a jacket. I need one to carry my hearing aid remote, batteries, Smartphone and.....

It's not too late to book.

Contact me lomas@videotron.ca

Planning meeting 16 Feb @Army Officers Mess

All are encouraged to attend as we need fresh ideas for our events in this 150 year of our great country.

Contact me lomas@videotron.ca

BOARD CHANGES Following the 2016 AGM we welcome a new board member, Ingrid Meier-Villa. Bob Mather has taken on the role of Membership Director. Please note that we are still looking for someone to serve as Webmaster and Vice President.



40 Years Between Convertibles

By Bob Mather

We picked up our 2005 CLK320 Cabriolet and happily returned to open air motoring about forty years after we had rolled our 1960 XK150 drop head coupe out of the garage and sold it to a



new owner. The sale was prompted by a pending move for Bristol UK to Montreal PQ. We bought the Jaguar in the first place partly because of a planned drive to Baden-Baden in the summer of 1969 and partly because we missed the XK140 I had owned few years before. We bought the CLK because we missed those open air summer drives. Especially spring and fall evenings. The new (to us) Mercedes had big shoes to fill, particularly when you think of the "rose tinted" memories of our Jaguar days. We remember the epic Bristol-Baden trip well. Not so easily recalled are the exhaust valve and

timing chain replacements and other items of T L C the XK demanded. The CLK is stacking up really well against our memories of the Jaguar. No epic trips, yet, but a satisfying number of days out at Club events and Tulip festival drive-bys sometimes with friends in the back seat. Some small issues to take care of on the CLK; DIY repairs on trunk separator struts and crankshaft position sensor. Nothing requiring the ITU at Star Motors, thankfully.

If you check in the Fall/Winter edition of Mercedes Benz magazine on page 50 there you will see, the inspiration for this, an article covering the heritage of the new S Class Cabriolet. The photos and artwork there are worth more than a second look. The way I see it, the double page picture is



"Nighthawks". What do you think? The references in the article to the market value for the classic car and the innovations of the new equivalent have parallels. The old Jaguar fares well in this comparison XKs are commanding justifiably high prices these days and we enjoy the comfort and convenience of the CLK not to mention the numerous safety enhancements.

Look for the silver CLK Cabriolet at some of next summer's MBCA Ottawa events and say Hi; we will share even more stories about the two cars.

My street cred would be much enhanced if we'd had 1960 SL 45 years ago. Apologies to the Mercedes-Benz purists but at least we have an M-B each now and we share the Cabriolet.

FACTS AND FIGURES: The size and weight of the cars are all fairly close. The Mercedes uses quite a bit less fuel and handles better.

reminiscent of Edward Hopper's,

	1960 Jaguar XK 150	2005 Mercedes-Benz CLK 320
Wheels base	102"	106.9"
Track	51"	58"
Tires	16' dia 6.0 width	225/45 x17" front 245/40 x 17" rear
Weight	3226lbs	3550 lb
Fuel Cons (city/highway)	17.6 l/100k 11.7l/100km	13.8 l/100km 9 l/100km
Engine/Drivetrain	3.8l; i6; r w d; 4spd manual	3.2 l; v6; r w d; 5spd auto
HP/Torque	210hp at 5500rpm/	215 hp at 5700rpm/229lb ft at 4600rpm
0-100kph	8.5 sec	7.2 sec
top speed	202 kph (1958 Autocar , road test)	210 kph (electronically limited)
Seats	2	4



Mercedes-Benz dethrones BMW as the king of luxury cars in America

By Benjamin Zhang
Business Insider

The results are in. Mercedes-Benz is now the top selling luxury car brand in the US. Mercedes took the top spot selling 340,237 vehicles in the US in 2016. Lexus followed in second place with 331,228 cars sold.

2015's king of the hill, BMW, finished third with 313,174 sales. Audi, which many observers now think of as a fourth member of the "Tier 1" luxury car club, sold 210,213 vehicles.

That's around 100,000 fewer vehicles than each of the Big Three, but Audi has been coming on strong in recent years. The Tier 1 auto brands have not experienced the same red hot sales figures as the rest of the industry. In fact, only Audi experienced positive growth with sales up 4% over 2015.



Why? The blame falls on coupes and sedans. Over the past few years, growth in the US auto market has been concentrated in crossovers and SUVs — a fact that extends into the luxury segment. Traditionally, the Tier 1 brands could reliably depend on their luxury coupes and sedans to generate sales volume.

While the sales volume is still there, growth isn't. Of the 31 non-crossover/SUV models offered by the four major brands, only five saw sales grow in 2016



— the Audi A4, R8, and TT along with the BMW 2-Series and 7-Series. In the case of these 5 models, all except the BMW 2-Series can attribute growth to pent up demand driven by the availability of a new generation product.

As a result, the four major brands live and die with their crossovers and SUVs. Neither Mercedes-Benz nor Lexus had any of its non-SUV models experience sales growth and yet, the brands managed to finish one-two in total sales. That's because both feature incredibly strong portfolios of SUVs. The new compact GLC crossover has worked wonders for Mercedes' SUV lineup. GLC sales grew 71.6%. The full-size GLS and ultra-premium G-Wagon models saw sales increase by roughly 9% respectively. For Lexus, its strong stable of SUVs have been a saving grace. While its passenger car sales fell 20% last year, the brand's



SUV sales shot up 12.5%. The mid-size Lexus RX has been a market leader for more than a decade. Last year, it was joined by the compact NX which saw sales increase by 25.4%.

The BMW 3-Series, long-held as the gold standard for compact sports sedans, saw its sales crater this year — down 25.5%. The 4-Series fell 22.2% while 5-Series sales shrunk 26.6%. Even though BMW's X1 and X3 crossovers saw a solid uptick in sales, they could not make up for losses in the passenger car segment of its lineup. As a result, BMW sales fell 9.5% from 346,023 vehicles to 313,174. Of the Tier 1 brands, only Audi actually



saw overall growth. VW's Group's luxury division was buoyed by strong growth from the A4 sedan along with the Q3 and Q7 crossover SUVs.

However, Audi is the junior member of the club. But over the past 15 years, the carmaker has stormed back to prominence in the US market after a scandal derailed the brand's growth during late 1980s. As Audi continues to grow year-over-year, the Ingolstadt-based brand will likely continue to close ground on the three stalwart Tier 1 brands. That could mean that BMW, Mercedes, and Lexus won't have the annual sales battle all to themselves for much longer.



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Mercedes-Benz SL450 and the Myth of Mega-Horsepower

By Dan Neil
Wall Street Journal

Vanity, thy name is horsepower.

I present two cars, both 2017 Mercedes-Benz SLs, except one has nearly twice the horsepower and torque of the other.

The first is our test car, the 2017 SL450, an appropriately luscious update of the company's immortal roadster, with a trim, bi-turbo'd 3.0-liter V6 (362 hp/369 pound-feet) under the hood.

Among the SL's features is the optional Active Body Control with a new "curve tilting function."

Imagine going around a 90-degree left-hander with no camber. The SL's suspension will instantly and subtly re-level the car to lean into the corner, taking advantage of centrifugal force to increase cornering confidence. It's that agreeable sensation of the car sweeping assuredly into and out of a corner, electronically contrived.

Honestly, my sense memory of previous SLs is that they handle like wire-guided

ordnance, fast but turned only with great effort. With the six-cylinder under the hood—and an all-aluminum makeover that shaves nearly 300 pounds off the unit body—the SL has a new lightness, a new litheness and way better handling balance and confidence. Oh yeah, definitely the six.

No, it doesn't have the beans to be a track-day car. It's more a third-wife-honeymoon-in-France-with-a-box-full-of-injectable-hormones car. But the SL450 (base price is around \$85,000; our tester is listed at about \$100,000) hustles just fine for a grand touring roadster.

The other car is a postdoctoral psychopath named the AMG SL65. This car looks very much like the SL450, but it has enslaved 12 cylinders instead of six, two bi-turbos instead of one, with double the displacement, nearly double the horsepower and exactly double the available torque (621 hp/738 pound-feet). But guess what? The AMG SL65 is only one second quicker to 60 mph (3.9

seconds) than the SL450. And that single tick comes dearly: in a car that costs \$132,500 more at \$217,550.

As you retrieve your jaw from the floor, you may wonder why the AMG SL65's 2X of everything doesn't translate into a bigger advantage in acceleration. Lots of reasons, actually, starting with the SL65's taller final gear ratio (2.65 vs. 3.07), which enables it to hit 186 mph at the top



end. Tires play a role. The 12-banger enjoys a huge advantage in weight-to-power (6.7 pounds per horsepower, compared with 10.56/hp). But it matters where that weight is distributed in the car. The SL65 is nose-heavy with engine, limiting rearward weight transfer, which is how hole-shot acceleration is made. In other words, the SL65 can't get more power to the ground, regardless of its launch control, locking rear diff and the 285/30s in the back. Absent a couple strategically placed sandbags in the trunk, the AMG SL65 is an icon of impotent rage.

As a formula for efficient performance, the V12-powered SL trembles on the very precipice of diminishing returns. So why does Mercedes-Benz even offer the V12 anymore? This is where it gets complicated and kind of awful. Because, it turns out, there are a sizable number of clients in the world who don't care about relative performance but who are only fixated on the numerical supremacy and

prestige of 12 cylinders. "Which one has the biggest engine?" a Mercedes-Benz engineer told me. "Some people come in and say, 'Right, that's the one I want.'" At the dark intersection of engineering and human desire, things are anything but clear. What accounts for the unreasoning love of extra cylinders, in an engine one can barely see with the hood up? Is it rooted in the savanna, a response to scarcity? Is it game theory, the impulse to claim the largest portion as an opening gambit? Is it about invidious comparison? To wit: the more expensive something is the better it is? People can be such jerks.

Less is never an easy sell.

Historically, more pans out better. Nevertheless, with the SL, I recommend the little engine.

There, I just saved you \$132,000.

Obviously, some footnotes: Merc's big, slinky roadsters also come with bi-turbo'd V8s, one a 4.7-liter (SL550) and an AMG-tuned 5.5-liter (AMG SL63). The more interesting story turned out

to be the SL450, which felt absolutely liberated from the model's legacy of heft. The engine is fluid, potent and hugely flexible, and can be played do-re-mi with the paddle-shifted nine-speed transmission. As the throttle goes down and the tail pipes grow voluble, the exhaust note sounds like pornographic Latin phrases muffled in silk.

You can't accuse the Mercedes interior design of blowing with the wind. At a time when flat-panel instrumentation and controls are all the rage, the high-end Merc cabins are celebrations of the button. The metal-finished crosshair climate vents seem overdrawn.

Who will buy these cars? One of the more fascinating notes I've read in a media release lately is this, from Mercedes-Benz Board member Ola Källenius: "The SL is an all-season vehicle that is fully suited for daily use. But above all it is a dream car for those special moments as a couple." That is so nice.



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