

1936

MERCEDES-BENZ 290 CABRIOLET A

By Aaron Weiss

Cars are often the product of their times reflecting the socio-economic trends of the day. This Mercedes-Benz 290 Cabriolet A is no exception. The world was rapidly changing in 1936 and the economic environment in Germany was in a state of chaos. The political world was equally tumultuous. It was under these sets of circumstances that Mercedes-Benz marketed the 290 models, offering the firm's reliability, luxury and status at a mid-price point.

Not as flamboyant or expensive as a 540K, the 290 radiated understated sensibility. The 290 was available in four Sindelfingen Karosserie convertible models known as a Cabriolet A, B, C and D. Most sporting among these was the Cabriolet A, the two-door, two-seat model. (B, C and D body styles ranged from two-door convertible victoria to four-door convertible sedans.)

Buyers could order the 290 Cabriolet A with several options, the most noticeable being a two-tone paint treatment. Configured as such, these models did not have fender lights, as the fenders had a reveal separating the two colors or paint. Therefore, when authenticating this 290 Cabriolet, the reveal in the fenders clearly signified that it was originally a two-tone model.

The factory where the 290 was manufactured was in Mannheim, German. The facility was incinerated by the Allies towards the end of World War II, and all factory records including build sheets, engineering prints and documents containing manufacturing specifications were destroyed. The

one item that needed to be authenticated was that this 290 had originally been manufactured with the most desirable of bodies, the Cabriolet A configuration. This was ultimately determined when Mercedes-Benz was able to produce a service record from 1970 that described the 290 as a Cabriolet A. At that time the car's value was such that there would be no rationale for re-bodying the car with a fabricated Cabriolet A body. Prior to its acquisition, Christian Kramer, a noted Germany authority on Mercedes-Benz and FIVA/HVA certified appraiser, inspected and evaluated the 290. Herr Kramer was able to provide a FIVA and a Deuvel certification of authenticity.

The 290 models all have the same 2.9-liter, six-cylinder engine with a three-speed manual transmission complete

with integral high-speed overdrive. The Cabriolet A is distinctive as it has a swooping rear profile with dual spares mounted in a recess in the rear deck.

This 290 Cabriolet A was located in Walluf, Germany by the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center which was an active participant in its authentication, locating and supplying many of the parts that were necessary to return the 290 to its original configuration. Interestingly, in Germany regardless of a car's date of manufacture, it must comply with all current laws to be driven on the street. Therefore, the seller of the car had removed its trafficators, installed modern turn signals and stoplights. In addition, a modern sound system had been installed along with a paraffin-like undercoating. >>>

OWNERS: VALERIE & AARON WEISS





This 290 has an interesting history. Although it was manufactured in 1936, the German records indicate that it was first sold in 1948 to a German industrialist. The family retained ownership of the car until 1975 when it was sold to an American enthusiast. The car traveled back to Germany in 1995 until it was sold to its current owner in November 2015.

Upon the 290's arrival in Los Angeles, the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Irvine, California inspected and authenticated the car, submitting a long list of items that required attention in order to make the car competitive at a concours. In January 2016 the 290 was accepted to the Pebble Beach Concours D'Elegance. This allowed only seven months to prepare the 290 for competition. The Mercedes-Benz Classic Center sent their shop foreman, Nat Linder to Essen, Germany to find various parts including trafficators,

bolts, and electrical parts. With these in hand, work began in earnest to remove the paraffin undercoating, detail the engine compartment, repaint the front quarter panels and engine enclosure, as well as replace the top. All of the brightwork was re-plated and of course, the Bose sound system removed. Trafficators were installed, the modern signal and stop lights removed and replaced with original components. In August 2016 the 290 made the journey to Pebble Beach where it was both on display at the Mercedes-Benz Pavilion and on the 18th fairway.

Subsequent to its first outing, the 290 has been exhibited at both the Hillsborough Concours D'Elegance and the Palos Verdes Concours D'Elegance and at both events it was awarded Best of Show. The 290 received 99-1/2 points at the CCCA Grand Classic at Lacy Park San Marino in June 2017.



The 1936 Mercedes-Benz at the San Marino Motor Classic (above left), at the Greystone Concour d'Elegance (above right) and traveling along Ocean Avenue in Carmel (above)



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