



## JUST THE FACTS

### Mercedes-Benz E500 Limited Brabus 6.0 (W124)

Engine M119 6-litre V8

Power 402bhp

Torque N/A

Transmission 4-speed auto, RWD

Weight N/A

0-62mph N/A

Top speed At least 180mph

#### OVERVIEW

Take a rare car, get the tuners to work on it and then do a bit more for good measure. Modding can get addictive but this is still what Mercedes intended, a comfortable, discreet car with more power than you might expect

*Figures for car pictured*



# POWER HUNGRY

The desire for fast everyday transport is not unusual, but for one man it changed his life forever **WORDS & IMAGES** CHRIS ECKERMANN



**W**HAT COULD YOU DO BACK IN 1990 WHEN YOU WANTED A CAR WITH A lot of power? There were the usual options: buy a Porsche, something Italian or an Aston Martin. What could you do in 1990 when you wanted a lot of power and four full seats? Take a Mercedes S-Class or a BMW 6- or 7-Series. However, there are situations where even an S-Class looks out of place, when you need the power of a sports car with the looks of a very, very normal car. Mercedes has long offered such 'stealth power', like the 1967 300SEL 6.3 and 1975 450SEL 6.9 – they look like bread and butter Benzes but behave like they are on steroids.

The W124 Mercedes E-Class is not known for flamboyancy, but the M119 322bhp 5.0-litre V8 made it a classic stealth machine. Indeed very little differentiated it from the stock W124s, wider wheelarches, a slight lowering and a different front skirt with integrated fog lights were nothing to make a fuss about.



Driving such a sleeper Mercedes appealed to Bernard Marijanovic. He entered the world of Mercedes with a crashed 190E 2.3-16 offered by a friend. This friend worked in a Mercedes dealership's body shop and wanted to help rebuild the car, but after nearly a year Bernard still saw no progress. Despite barely knowing one end of a screwdriver from the other he decided he had to help himself. Assisting at a friend's repair shop gave him valuable insight and facilities, and finally, with the help of friends, the car was driving again.

Bernard was pleased, but not for long. The engine was not running properly. He asked around for advice and every idea was expensive. With a glance to his wallet, Bernard decided to jump in at the deep end and find the error himself. He found a tiny rupture at one of the spark plug holders, a very easy and cheap repair that could have cost him thousands of pounds to find through dealership charges. This success gave him



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Gone is the E500's usual understated form, customised red brakes peeking out from behind 20-inch wheels.



△ Three-part, split rim, 20-inch Brabus wheels were fitted without modifying the body.

▷ Standard on E500 Limiteds were these rather colourful Recaro seats and door cards.



▷ a 190E 2.5-16 with an Evo II engine. Finally Bernard's expertise saw him helping a motorsport company prepare a competition 190 Evo raced by Ellen Lohr.

### TO THE NEXT LEVEL

After a number of years playing with the 16-valve engines our (now) expert longed for a little more. He wanted a 32-valve V8 and purchased and renovated a 500E. Again, Bernard threw himself into the project, another new field of Mercedes mechanicals, and taught himself everything. A number of modifications took his 500E to another level. The rear wings were widened in steel, a set of 19-inch Brabus wheels was fitted, the chassis was modified, a GT3 brake kit with 380mm discs was added, and a new paint job and a complete new set of windows made the car look like new. Bernard

His 500E's excellent condition attracted many admirers, including a friend who wanted one for himself so asked Bernard to help source a car, since he was now something of an expert. After some months of searching, a Brabus conversion of the E500 turned up in the Netherlands. This E500 Limited Brabus 6.0 was



sound and Bernard strongly suggested his friend should buy it. However, his friend wanted a five-litre car, not the six-litre Brabus – but Bernard was tempted. He gave it some thought and a deal was struck. His friend took his 500E and Bernard replaced it with the Brabus 6.0.

Now while the Mercedes 500E/E500 is a rare car with only 10,479 built (including the pre production cars and the E60 AMG), Bernard had just bought himself something even rarer, one of the 500 examples built as Limited E500s. They relied on the same mechanicals as the E500 but received a number of visual tweaks. While there are only a few Limited E500s – 500 examples were built – Bernard's is even more special. It was converted by Brabus when new. The most important part of the Brabus conversion is the engine. The original five-litre,



Despite the rarity of his car Bernard is still modifying it, the stainless steel exhaust a more obvious alteration.



△ The six-litre Brabus engine is soon to be replaced by a 6.5-litre V8.

◁ The 6.0 has 402bhp, 80bhp up on the not knowingly underpowered E500.

**As is always the case, if you start modifying a car you will find it hard to stop!**

▷ from six litres instead of the original 322bhp. Modifications included a special crank, pistons, camshafts, valves and optimised cylinderheads. A longer rear axle means a higher maximum speed, displayed on the 300km/h (186mph) speedometer. A special oil cooling system with thermostatic control from 80C onward was also especially developed for the modified engines. Want even more power? Brabus fitted a handful of cars with a modified 7.3-litre V12 spitting out 523bhp and capable of reaching 307 km/h (191mph), depending on the rear axle – this was the Brabus E 7.3 V12.

However Bernard was perfectly happy with 'just' six litres to play with. But despite going from a rare car to a very rare car, this was not exclusive enough for him and he decided to modify his Brabus 6.0 even further. The original exhaust went and was replaced by a stainless steel one with two Brabus racing cats as well as the tail dampener originally produced for a Brabus W140 with a 7.3-litre engine. The

special adaptation produced especially for Bernard's car – 396mm discs and six-pot billet calipers at the front and 342mm discs with four-pot calipers at the rear. The original handbrake was integrated and a set of steel flex lines added for security.

#### PRACTICAL PERFORMANCE

The car wears a set of Brabus three-part, split rim, 20-inch wheels. Unfortunately, the 20-inch wheels (originally for the S-Class) were only available as 9.5x20-inchers. Because Bernard was adamant the body of the car had to stay untouched he had to modify the wheels, finally fitting 9x20-inch wheels at the front and 10.5x20-inch wheels at the rear. All these modifications had to work without changing the body and the Brabus sports chassis. This means four passengers and a boot full of luggage can still be carried without any scraping. The rear axle was modified to allow a top speed of more than 290km/h (180mph) –

claims his car is a relaxing drive even over 250km/h (155mph).

The original exterior and interior remained unmolested to underline the rarity of his Limited E500 – he just added a set of Brabus illuminated stainless steel entrance protectors. As is always the case, if you start modifying a car you will find it hard to stop! A Brabus 6.5-litre V8 engine with even more power is to be fitted in the near future and dark tinted windows are also planned.

However, although the car might be nearing completion, others keep Bernard busy. There's another E500, an R129 Brabus 6.9-litre V12 and a W140 S600L that is going to be fitted with a 7.3-litre Brabus V12. He's got the bug! Bernard is seemingly only happy with plenty of power surrounding him. His passion for V8s and V12s led to him opening a W140 internet discussion forum, as well as inspiring him to start his own business specialising in the 500E/E500 and the V8 and V12 engined W140s. It seems you can