



This more modern gate reveals the car's new five-speed auto.

△ Springs and dampers can be tweaked to the owner's taste.  
▷ Little was required to get the M113 V8 installed in the coupe.

“If you do not open the bonnet, there is absolutely no clue to the fact that this is a Mechatronik car”



A new V8 heart and uprated suspension have had a big effect on the coupe's drive.

# CLASSIC EVOLUTION

The beautiful, timeless lines of this W111 coupe appear familiar, yet there is much more to this particular Mercedes than meets the eye

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SINCE MY LAST VISIT TO MECHATRONIK IN 2005, a lot has changed. The company has doubled the size of its premises and divided operations into Classic, Engineering and Trade departments. Classic undertakes all the restoration work on classic Mercedes, while Engineering prototypes and produces the 'New Tech Restoration' cars – the classic stars with modern engines that Mechatronik is known for. Finally, Trade buys and sells cars.

Interestingly, Mechatronik's famous New Tech cars have not been successful in Germany. "German classic car enthusiasts are purists and we've only ever sold one car in our home market," said Mechatronik founder, Frank Rickert. "All our customers are from other countries like Japan, Korea, Indonesia, South Africa and even Israel. In fact one good client in South Africa has five New Tech cars including an SL Pagoda with an M113 E43 4,266cc V8 motor."

I drove Mechatronik's V6 engine Pagoda five years ago, yet the car I have come to drive today is even more interesting because it has a

modern version of the engine and gearbox it left the factory with in 1970. The W111 coupe and cabriolet, specifically the 280SE 3.5 with the two valves per cylinder, 3,499cc, 197bhp motor (M116), are incredibly desirable cars that fetch significant money in nice condition, and serious money if they are in absolutely mint condition.

However the coupe I have come to drive today is better than new. I recently drove a perfect, factory restored example from the Mercedes-Benz Classic collection, but this Mechatronik coupe actually overshadows this. The factory car was silver with black leather, a classic but rather staid combination. In light blue metallic with a caramel interior, the Mechatronik car looks far more fetching, and I can't help but notice the perfection of every detail on its bodywork and interior. If you do not open the bonnet, there is absolutely no clue to the fact that this is a Mechatronik New Tech car. The small Mechatronik badge on the rear and the automatic gearlever gate with its '4' plus 'D' shift pattern are the only give aways for the sharp eyed enthusiast. ▷