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CALENDAR

New Models and Technology, Sun March 20
Board meeting, Mon. Apr. 4
Chemainus Theatre, Sun, Apr. 10 (new event)
V.I. Motorsport Park, Sun, May 8.
Interior detailing, Sun. May 15
Annual picnic, Sun. Jun. 26
Sunshine Coast tour, Jul. 9-11 (Seattle, BC Sections)
Motor Gathering, Sun. Aug. 21
Tech talk: Intelligent Drive, Sat. Sep. 17 (new date)
Oktoberfest, Oct. date TBA
Annual Meeting, Sun. Nov. 6
Holiday dinner, Dec date TBA

Some dates have still to be finalized.

Section Officers

President: Bob Wilson
Vice-President: Jamie Graham
Secretary: Hazel Ostrowerka
Treasurer: Rob Watson
Membership: Jeff Cohen
Newsletter: Bob Wilson
Website: Rob Watson
Dealer Ambassador, Victoria: Dennis Ostrowerka
Dealer Ambassador, Nanaimo: Barry Patchett
Director at Large: Ron Drane
Director at Large: Kevin Carlé
Hon. Vice President: Peter Trzewik

More Than a Car. We’re a Community™
**Coming Events**

**Sunday, Mar. 20: New Models and Technology**

We’ll meet at noon in the service area of Three Point Motors for our annual look at the new and refreshed models and technological advances released in the past year. David Rabii and Peter Braunschmidt will have a number of vehicles to walk us around and describe. We’ll also hear about what’s coming in the next few months. There will an ample question-and-answer session. Then we’ll have a lunch of barbecued bratwurst with sauerkraut and non-alcoholic beverages. After lunch, the new vehicles will be available for short test drives.

This event has consistently been one of the most popular in our calendar. To give us a count for lunch, would you please let Hazel & Dennis Ostrowerka know you’re coming (click). We’ll be collecting $5 a head at the event to cover the cost of lunch.

**Sunday, Apr. 10: Chemainus Theatre & Lunch**

An outing to the Chemainus theatre returns to our calendar. The performance on offer for April 10th is the Ring of Fire Project (click), a tribute to Johnny Cash. Chemainus Theatre is very good at musicals and this performance is sure to please those looking for a “rockabilly story of finding love, success, faith, and redemption”, along with a twang of country music.

Our trips to Chemainus were a popular part of the events calendar a few years ago. We’d like at least ten people to register by March 31st to make one happen this year. As before, the price includes an extravagant buffet lunch at the theatre at noon. Please mail a cheque for $69 per person, payable to MBCA-Vancouver Island, to:

Rob Watson
#508 6880 Wallace Drive
Brentwood Bay BC V8M 1N8.

**July 9-11: Sunshine Coast Tour**

Seattle Section is organizing a tour up the Sunshine Coast from Saturday, July 9 to Monday, July 11. Participants will stay Saturday night in North Vancouver at the Pinnacle at the Pier Hotel and Sunday night at West Coast...
**Wilderness Lodge** in Egmont. The organizers plan a fabulous, over-the-top drive along the famed Sunshine Coast, lunch in Sechelt at the Lighthouse Pub, and a group dinner at the hotel on the deck for Sunday evening. There are several options for hiking, kayaking and two different Zodiac Tours for activities on Monday. The Zodiac tours to Princess Louisa Inlet and Chatterbox Falls are incredibly beautiful.

Space at the lodge in Egmont is limited and will sell out well in advance. If you might be interested in going, please contact the organizer, Ian Gleadle (click) as soon as possible.

**Stargazing**

**SL Facelift**
Details of the R231 SL’s mid-life facelift have been released. The front end sheet metal has been revised to lighten its appearance and lift sales, which have not lived up to expectations. Everything in front of the A-pillars is new, according to development chief Michael Scheer. The front end is still blunt but new fenders and a longer hood slope more steeply toward the grill. The headlamps are aggressively angled down and to the side, not unlike the AMG-GT’s (click; hat tip to Mike McBride).

*photo: autoweek.com*

The rest of the world, including the USA, has been offered a six-cylinder version of the R121 SL since its introduction in 2013. Badged as the SL400, this model accounts for over half the American SL sales. The V6 is being upgraded to 362 hp and 369 lb-ft., and models so equipped will be badged as the SL450. The V8 in the
SL550 stands pat. Both models get MB’s new nine-speed transmission, which has three overdrive ratios to save fuel on the highway. Performance of the SL63 and SL65 AMGs continues unchanged; these two models account for about 7% and 1%, respectively, of SL sales.

Models equipped with Automatic Body Control will have four performance settings instead of two: Comfort, Sport, Sport Plus, and Individual. As well as the ride, these settings affect steering effort, throttle response, transmission shift points and stability control. A Curve function allows the body to tilt slightly inwards, like a motorcycle. The suspension drops automatically by half an inch at highway speeds and, a bit like an old Citroen, can be raised nearly two inches for poor roads.

Of course, the SL these days is about much more than performance. The cars are loaded with the latest in technology and luxury; they still occupy a special niche in the market for high-end sports cars. The SL’s main alternative, the Porsche Carrera, is a different beast—less luxury and fewer features, but almost 800 lbs. lighter. The new car goes on sale as a 2017 model.

C43 Coupe and Cabriolet
There is currently no C-class coupe on offer in Canada but one is expected in the summer. MB’s management have announced a toned down version of the C63 AMG, to be delivered in the next year. It will be badged in Europe as the C43 AMG. Surprisingly, it will not use the same 2-L four cylinder as the CLA43 and GLA43.

Instead, it appears to use the same 3-L twin-turbo V6 as the current C450 AMG sedan, developing the same 362 hp. The new AMG coupe will come with a 9-speed gearbox, all-

Inside, the C43 will come with aluminum highlights and red stitching.

Photo: telegraph.co.uk (hat tip to Mike McBride)
wheel drive, and adaptive suspension. Its introduction will mark the end of the short-lived AMG-Sport package as the company moves to two different levels of AMG models.

The long awaited C-class cabriolet was released to the public earlier this month at the Geneva auto show. The cabrio seems to be MB’s response to the small convertibles of BMW and Audi, and will likely offer a similar amount of space. The base model will be the 4-cyl C300 with rear-wheel drive, but a 4-Matic version will follow shortly. The cabrio borrows features like Airscarf and Aircap from its larger E-class cousin.

![A C43 AMG cabriolet. A surprisingly attractive and colourful Daimler photo](image-url)

Airbag Recall
A number of sources have reported that Mercedes-Benz is affected by the industry-wide problem of defective airbags manufactured by Takata. The company will recall 711,266 cars and SUVs, and another 136,000 US-built Sprinter vans. Models included are reported to be from the C, E, M, R and GL classes, two years of the SLK; and the SLS AMG ([click](link) for a list).

The problem is thought to be related to the use of ammonium nitrate as the propellant for airbag inflation. This chemical can degrade in warm, humid conditions. When a collision sets off the igniter in a degraded airbag, the result can be an explosion that ruptures the airbag and sprays hazardous plastic and metal fragments from the unit fixings. MB says there have been no reports of airbag ruptures or injuries in any of its vehicles, so the recall is precautionary only. A repair schedule has not been released.
The New OM654 Diesel

Diesel engines are far more common in Europe than in North America. We cannot, for instance buy a C-class diesel in Canada, though that is the most popular configuration in Europe. Diesels here in Canada are presently available in just the E-class and the GLE, which have four and six cylinders respectively.

Let’s start with a word about emissions. If you’re still reading you’ll have heard about the scandal affecting diesels made by Volkswagen, whose nitrogen oxide emissions on the road are several times the regulated limit. VW created this problem for themselves by choosing not to add a urea-based chemical into the exhaust stream above the catalysts, a procedure that Mercedes-Benz has found essential for diesels. The compression ignition of diesel engines creates two problems that gasoline engines share to a lesser degree. The first is particulates, essentially the black smoke you can see coming from the exhaust pipe of older diesels. The second is emissions of nitrogen oxides, a smog precursor and a greenhouse gas. I once read that the combustion process in diesel engines can be ‘tuned’ to minimize the emissions of particulates or nitrogen oxides, but that both can’t be minimized at the same time. The final setting for the real world is a compromise of many things; hence the need for particle traps and urea addition to the suite of exhaust controls on diesels. VW thought they could skip a step and are now paying the price. Daimler’s management have assured us that VW’s problem does not affect Mercedes-Benz.

The OM 654. Daimler photo

The diesel currently available in the E-Class is the 4-cyl OM 651. It’s about to be replaced by a completely new engine, the OM654 (click for Daimler’s media release), with more power from a smaller displacement. The new engine weighs less than the old one because it’s built with an aluminum block and cylinder heads. It has steel
pistons with nanoslide technology (a slippery coating on the cylinder bores) and stepped combustion chambers, something new. All the exhaust treatment technologies are “configured directly on the engine”. Noise and vibration have both been reduced.

This table of characteristics is taken from Daimler’s media release.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engine</th>
<th>220 d OM 654</th>
<th>220 d Predecessor OM 651</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of cylinders/Arrangement</td>
<td>4/in-line</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valves per cylinder</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displacement per cylinder</td>
<td>cc 487.5</td>
<td>cc 537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displacement</td>
<td>cc 1950</td>
<td>cc 2143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cylinder spacing</td>
<td>mm 90</td>
<td>mm 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bore</td>
<td>mm 82</td>
<td>mm 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>mm 92.3</td>
<td>mm 99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bore/stroke</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting rod length</td>
<td>mm 140</td>
<td>mm 144</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rated output</td>
<td>kW/hp 143/195</td>
<td>kW/hp 125/170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>rpm 3800</td>
<td>rpm 3000-4200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak torque</td>
<td>Nm 400</td>
<td>Nm 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>rpm 1600-2400</td>
<td>rpm 1400-2800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific output</td>
<td>kW/l 72</td>
<td>kW/l 58.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compression ratio</td>
<td>1: 15.5</td>
<td>1: 16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emissions standard</td>
<td>EU6</td>
<td>EU6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engine weight (DIN)</td>
<td>kg 168</td>
<td>kg 199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Kecskemét**

Daimler opened an assembly plant in Kecskemét, Hungary in 2012, part of the company’s plan to ramp up production of compact cars (April 2012 issue). This plant makes the CLA for global markets, along with the B-Class. Last month it celebrated its 500,000th vehicle, a black CLA destined for a customer in Hungary. Production last year was 183,000 cars.

*Kecskemét has over 4,000 workers and exclusively produces the CLA for the world market. Daimler photo*
**Powering Up**

*Automotive News* reported last month that South Korea’s SK Innovation is developing new lithium ion battery cells for several models of Mercedes-Benz. SK will supply the cells but MB will assemble the battery packs in-house. No other details were available.

Meanwhile, Daimler’s research chief Thomas Weber described plans to develop a family of battery-powered MBs. The offerings will include two sedans and two crossovers, all based on a new platform architecture called EVA, specifically for electric vehicles. EVA will join MFA and MRA as the third architecture underpinning the company’s cars and SUVs. The B, CLA and GLA ride on MFA, whereas everything else sold in Canada uses the MRA architecture.

The company plans to require its managers to drive electrified MB models to set an example for customers and employees. Initially the program will focus on plug-in hybrids. In Europe, these include models in the C, E, S, GLC and GLE classes. I looked into power-train offerings on Mercedes-Benz Canada’s website last month and, as far as I know, none of these hybrids are currently available to us. The company plans to invest €30 million in installing and upgrading EV chargers at its facilities.

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*SK Innovation battery packs  Photo: Elektrek.com (hat tip to Mike McBride)*

**The W140 turns 25**

This month marks the 25th anniversary of the W140 S Class, a significant development for the pinnacle of MB’s sedan range. It was in production from 1991 to 1998, those seven years a way-point on the road to shorter product life cycles. The W140 replaced the W126, whose production had lasted for 11 years. *Wikipedia* says 476,710 W140 sedans and 26,022 coupes were made. The coupe, for my money, is the prettiest Mercedes-Benz model of the 1990s, offering stylish and luxurious transportation for four people.

Several pivotal technologies emerged in the 1990s. The W140 brought innovations that can still be found on today’s cars and SUVs. They have electric closing for the doors and trunk. Rear parking markers on early cars rise like small antennae from the corner of each back fender to assist parking manoeuvres, later replaced by
the introduction of Parktronic. The Rest feature was introduced, allowing the heater to continue to circulate warm air after the car is shut off. Electronic Stability Control (ESC), Brake Assisted Stopping (BAS, a curious name for the technology that engages maximum effective braking in an emergency stop) and Anti-Slip Acceleration were both offered for the first time, along with bi-xenon headlamps. Rain-sensing wipers, side airbags and Linguatronic voice control came along in 1996. The double-glazed side windows were an exception to the continuity of innovation, but give the W140 an exceptionally quiet ride.

An S600 sedan from after the 1994 facelift.

Daimler photo

Most Canadian cars were sold with a 315-322 hp 5-litre V8. The later cars have the lesser power, a function of increasing emission controls. The W140 was the first MB to offer V12 power as an option: the S600 had a 389-402 hp 6-litre engine and an even more luxurious interior. A long-wheelbase model, designated the V140, was given an extra 100 mm between the wheels, entirely in the back seat. They were not light cars and they were not light on gas. An S500 weighs 1,880 kg (4,145 lbs) and the long wheelbase version tips the scales at 2,190 kg, or 4,828 lbs.

The W140 500 SEC, a car I continue to look at fondly.  Wikimedia photo

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These were big cars for important people. The level of luxury and the innovations in technology continue to make them a good drive, and the sedans are not an uncommon sight on the streets of Victoria.

**Trends**
The consultants at KPMG annually release the results of a survey of CEOs and C-suite executives in the global auto industry. The survey sample favours the executives of manufacturing companies, with dealers and suppliers completing a minority of the questionnaires. Unsurprisingly, Europeans are the largest group polled, but North American executives (USA, Mexico, Canada in that order) are well represented.

Here are the top ten trends these executives reported in the survey for 2015:
1. Connectivity and digitalization
2. Hybrid electric vehicles
3. Battery electric vehicles
4. Market growth in emerging markets
5. Fuel cell electric vehicles
6. Mobility-as-a-service (alternative ownership models)
7. Customer data / big data
8. Platform strategies and modular production systems
9. Autonomous and self-driving cars (Daimler is rated #6 among manufacturers here)
10. Downsized internal combustion engines

These trends, or priorities, will do much to shape the auto industry over the next ten years. You’ll see that several are related to reducing emissions and improving fuel economy. Technology is also driving the way the industry thinks and plans. KPMG says: “The era of one product development cycle is over. It has to be split into a minimum of three: Long term (3-5 years) metalsmith-based; mid-term (1-2 years) software/exchangeable components-based; and short term (1 month to one year) release on demand-based”. That comment will likely be reflected in the pace of new offerings from Mercedes-Benz.

The global survey ranked the Daimler Group in 10th place in terms of its innovation and technology leadership, and further down in terms of its growth potential. The leaders there are BMW and Toyota. Let me know if you’d like to see more information about any these topics (click).

**The Back End**
The US National Highway and Traffic Safety Authority has ruled that the ‘driver’ of an autonomous vehicle is the vehicle itself (click). First legal hurdle sorted, then, but it promises to put manufacturers on a big tow-hook for liability.

Some reasons why productivity at Mercedes-Benz is among the lowest in the industry: about 13 cars per year per employee (click).
An S63 AMG cabriolet at last month’s Toronto Auto Show. Photo: Tino Rossini