

CLASSIC DRIVER

[This Mercedes Pagoda proves Pininfarina can improve any design](#)

Lead

No, your eyes aren't deceiving you: this is a wider and longer version of the effortlessly graceful Mercedes 230 SL. Designed by Pininfarina, this German classic is likely to cause quite a stir when it goes under the hammer at Pebble Beach on August 20th with Gooding & Company.



The year is 1963, you're settled into your role as a designer at the world-famous Pininfarina design house, and between penning cars like the Ferrari 330 GTC and Alfa Romeo Giulia Spider, you spot a new generation of the Mercedes SL being unveiled in Geneva. You decide to send the bosses at Mercedes-Benz a letter asking if you could design a one-off version to showcase the coachbuilder's talents, just two months after the SL had been launched. No, this isn't the stuff of legends or some urban myth, this was precisely what young American stylist Tom Tjaarda did while working for Pininfarina in 1963.



The bosses at Mercedes-Benz obliged, and Tjaarda got to work on his masterpiece. First, he swapped the 'pagoda' hardtop for a more permanent roof, turning his creation into a true coupé. While the overall style of the front grille was retained, it was made it broader and more pronounced, giving it some natural Italian flair. Subtle but noticeable differences litter this SL, where the wheel arches are slightly wider than the original, accentuating the curved roofline and shorter bonnet. The rear window panel leading down to the rear lights is perhaps the most noticeable change to the overall design. The rear lights are also reminiscent of the units designed by Tjaarda found on the Ferrari 330 GT 2+2. Inside, the dashboard is unchanged, but the interior feels distinctly Italian, with plenty of hand-crafted touches.



It's impossible to compare this car to any other, as this is the sole example in existence. It was a passion project from the Italian coachbuilder, who simply wanted to experiment with German-made vehicles while retaining their core features. This glorious automobile is set to go under the hammer at the upcoming Pebble Beach auction on August 20th with Gooding & Company, and all of us here at Classic Driver are excited to find out what final sale price this unique beauty will achieve.

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