

CMC 1955 Mercedes-Benz W196 Streamliner

The tipping point of German racing superiority

Far in advance of Ferrari's omnipresence in F1, or Porsche's dominance of endurance racing, and prior to the Ford/Ferrari war at Le Mans, Mercedes-Benz owned the world's most prestigious racing events.

After World War II, Grand Prix racing resumed with technology that was in flux. Prewar race cars were brought back to life to fill the early need while automakers tried desperately to rebuild their technology. Alfa Romeo dominated the first two seasons of racing. In 1952, Ferrari emerged from Modena, Italy, to lead the European speed wars. With 1954 changes in engine size and fuel-delivery rules, Mercedes-Benz entered the Grand Prix game with its Streamliner powered by the innovative M196 engine.

When rolled out to the starting grid at the Reims Grand Prix, the Streamliner was an awesome sight. No other race car looked or drove like it. It was a spaceship among airplanes. Juan Fangio drove the number-one Streamliner and narrowly defeated teammate Karl Kling. A Ferrari finished third—one lap behind the two Streamliners.

Fangio's one complaint

was that the full-bodied Streamliner was difficult to drive on roadcourses such as Silverstone and Nurburgring because the full body did not allow him to see the front wheels as he began to apex tight turns. Mercedes-Benz therefore crafted a more traditional open-wheel car to fit over the technically advanced M196 engine and chassis. The Streamliner body was used on high-speed tracks such as Avus and Monza.

In 1955, tragedy struck the autoracing world when a Mercedes-Benz 300SLR left the course during the 24 Hours of Le Mans and flew into the grandstands on the front straight killing the driver and 87 spectators. Mercedes-Benz immediately

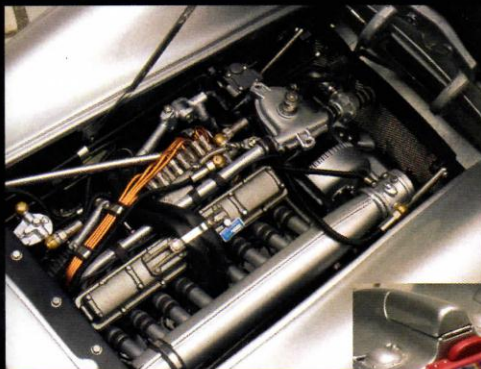
pulled out of all forms of racing. This left the W196R race cars in storage in Stuttgart, Germany. They remained there untouched for 40 years.

FORM MEETS FUNCTION

Exterior. Whenever you decided to shell out a significant number of dollars to acquire a premium diecast, expectations are high. Disappointment is not something anyone wants and the Streamliner will set you back on your heels. CMC moved the art of 1:18-scale diecast into a new league with its Mercedes-Benz W196R. The body is truly unbelievable—fit, finish, casting, trim; all are as close to perfect as

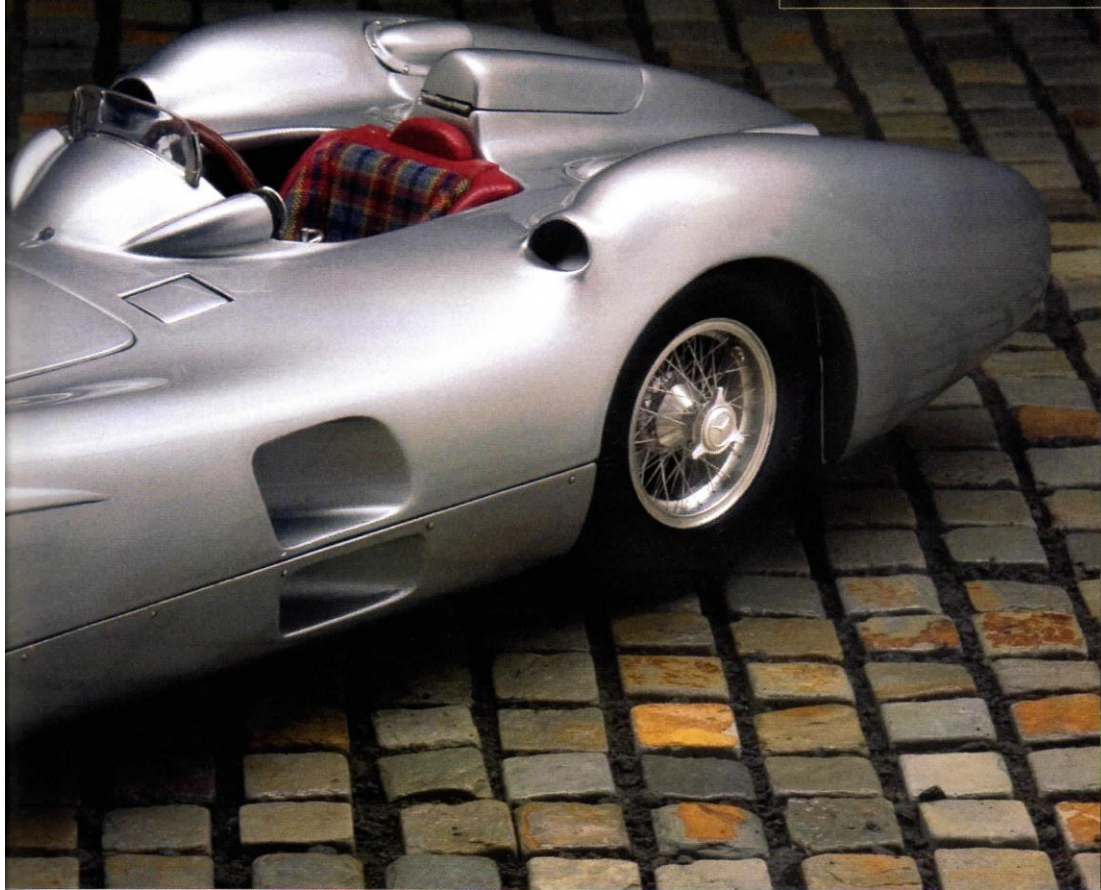
any diecast we have ever seen. It was so difficult to find a flaw that we looked in places we never considered on other diecasts—at any price. The body perfectly reflects MB's advanced thinking in the early 1950s. Covered in sensual silver, the body has more bumps and curves than a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader. And each one is perfect. Screen mesh covers the grille opening and the reverse teardrop air-intake duct on the hood. The exterior is free of trim with the notable exception of a three-pointed star emblem on the nose. A pair of

Right: just as cockpit. The cloth and sin behind the s the fuel filter



Left: CMC faithfully reproduces the remarkable M196 engine. It features a parts list that would choke a horse and a realism that few other diecast cars can match.

Right: just as impressive is the driver's cockpit. The form-fitting seat has tartan cloth and simulated leather. The hatch behind the seat flips up to allow access to the fuel filter.



SPECS

Scale: 1:18
Length: 9.5 in.
Wheelbase: 5.25 in.
Width: 3.75 in.
Height: 2 in.
Price: \$250

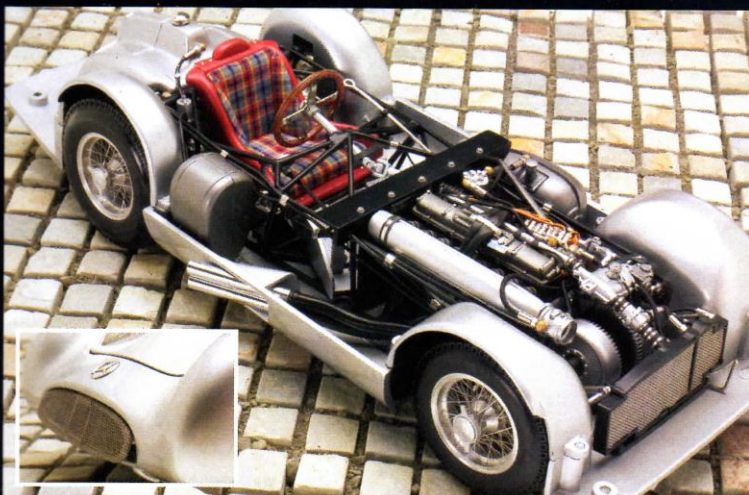
FEATURES

- > Rolling wheels
- > Functional steering
- > Opening hood, fuel door
- > Removable body shell

RATINGS (scale of 1-5)

- > Body, paint 5
- > Wheels, tires 5
- > Engine 5
- > Chassis, suspension 4.5
- > Interior 5
- > Presentation 5
- > Collectibility 4

OUT OF THE BOX



With the upper body removed, CMC's attention to detail is revealed. Even though it's usually covered, every tiny detail is reproduced; the intricacy of the interior cage is also visible here. Inset: not even the lever-actuated opening mesh has been overlooked.

exhaust trumpets exit via a port on the right side. Other than that one protrusion, every inch is sleek and smooth and shows how far ahead of its time the style was.

Interior. The W196R had one function and needed only one seat. The aluminum bucket is covered in simulated leather with a tartan insert. The steering wheel is massive (as was required to generate enough leverage to turn this race car without a power-assist device). The wheel is four spokes inside a wood-grain ring with a separate center hub. The legible gauge cluster is minimal in concept and simple in design. The highly detailed floor pan—yes, floor pan—features mesh plate runners that lead to the accelerator and brake pedal on the right and the clutch on the left. A spectacular and intricate cage surrounds the entire area. The steering mechanism features four links prior to reaching the lowered steering control rod that turns the front wheels.

Engine In 1954, the M196

engine could have been classified as one of the seven wonders of the world. Residing under the Streamliner's hood was a 2496cc straight-eight engine that was a revolutionary design for the time. MB engineer Hans Gassmann was charged with developing the engine. He designed an in-line eight-cylinder so that the entire assembly could be mounted on an incline in the chassis to keep the weight low for a low center of gravity. From earlier testing, Gassmann knew that traditional four-valve cylinder heads would not work because of valve-bounce during high revs that would result in piston damage and engine failure. He came up with a two-cam lobe design in which one lobe opened each valve in the usual way while a D-shaped lobe worked through an L-shaped rocker to pull it closed. This led to the two-valve combustion chamber with a hemispherical head. As advanced as this was for the time, so, too, is CMC's replica of the M196 engine. This is, without

question, the best diecast engine ever reviewed in the pages of *DieCast X*. It is amazingly detailed. Every aspect has been researched and applied, right down to the correct kinks in the rubber hoses. Hours can be spent looking at the intricacy of the fuel lines, ignition delivery system and air and fuel-delivery details. The amount of time and effort and the number of individual components involved in the creation of this historic racer are overwhelming. It is diecast perfection.

Chassis, tires & wheels.

To best view the engine and interior, remove the six screws from the vehicle's underbelly. This allows the body to be removed, and it's the only way to inspect the suspension. Although much of the suspension is obscured by the belly pan, fuel tank and engine, CMC didn't hold back from making it as perfect as the rest of the car. With a keen eye and a bit of maneuvering, you can see the multipiece, fully independent rear swing axle

suspension with angled half shafts and drum brake enclosures. Likewise with the front suspension's A-arms, shocks, steering rod and anti-roll bar. Attached to all four corners are very realistic wire wheels with knock-off caps. Tires are Continental 7.00-16 (rear) and 6.00-16 (front). The molding is so precise that it even allows you to read the fine print on the tires' sidewalls.

CHECKERED FLAG

The Streamliner incorporated so many innovations that became commonplace a few years after its introduction. Features such as space-frame technology, direct fuel-injection delivery and the use of desmodromic valve gears all became part of racing's advancements in speed and durability. Hans Gassmann and his team of scientists created a racer that was way ahead of its time. In the process, they pushed the speed envelope with better aerodynamics and power delivery. With just 152 cubic inches of engine, the M196 produced 290 horsepower. The slippery body made use of the power, and the W196R Streamliner posted a top closed-course speed record of 186mph. Of the four Streamliners, two remain under the control of Mercedes-Benz and are among its museum collection. On rare occasions, we see a Streamliner at "historical" racing events. They remain one of the most beautiful and most functional race cars of all time. In the same spirit of perfection, CMC pushes the limits of premium diecast with this 1:18-scale vintage racer. It features a remarkable 1,100 pieces of scale realism. Its detail is eclipsed only by its beauty. ☼

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