

Herpa models Mercedes Pocket Rocket

by Bill Cawthon

Scott Madeleine is a 25-year-old teacher who lives in the Detroit, Michigan area. When he saw the 2002 Mercedes-Benz C230 sports coupe, he said, "I wish I had known Mercedes made a car like this before I bought my (GMC) Jimmy."

Quite a statement from a young man in SUV-happy America.

Anita and Paul Leinert quoted Scott's reaction was in their weekly "He Drove, She Drove," column that appears in the online edition of the *Detroit News*.^{*} The Leinerts, although closer in age to me than to Mr. Madeleine, were also impressed and gave the C230 their "world-class" rating. Anita Leinert noted the C230 would probably bring a whole new audience into Mercedes showrooms. Of course, that's the idea.

Younger and first-time buyers are a big part of the target audience for this small Mercedes with a base price under \$25,000. In addition to being the least expensive, the C230 is the smallest Mercedes car sold in the United States, and is only about 2½ feet longer than the standard A-Class, the smallest Mercedes-badged product sold anywhere. The C230 will compete with new products from BMW, but more importantly, DaimlerChrysler believes it will get younger buyers into Mercedes products as they begin their careers. In this way, the company hopes to build a fresh base of customers loyal to the three-pointed star.



While the bobtailed, forward-slanted styling has been controversial, there's no question the car has the performance desired by younger drivers. In European trim, the C230 Kompressor hits 60 mph in just over seven seconds and tops out around 148. Not bad numbers for a 2.3-liter inline 4-cylinder engine. The 16-valve, supercharged powerplant puts out 192 bhp and 200 lb-ft of torque between 2500 and 4800 rpm.

Herpa released their model of the C230 sports coupe in June of this year. Herpa actually refers to the new models as C-Class Sports Coupes, since several variations are available in the home market. However, the U.S. gets only a single version, the C230K, so for folks in the North American markets to refer to the new model as a C230 or C230K is just fine.

Although Herpa's quality has been uneven on some of their new products lately (especially in regards to other versions of the C-Class line) the Sports Coupe has all the features Herpa

includes on its best models. The C230's signature glass roof is nicely reproduced and Herpa has taken none of the detail shortcuts that have marred some of their other models. The tooling



is sharp and the finish on my metallic green model was very nice even though the color looked a little darker and less yellow than the real thing. The red used on the Herpa standard production looks to be close to the prototype "Paprika" color offered by Mercedes-Benz. Incidentally, only four exterior colors are offered for the C230K. Officially, they are Citron Green, Paprika, Orion Blue and Brilliant Silver. Perhaps Herpa can finish out the palette in the next release.

As you would expect from one of the German modelmakers, the overall dimensions of the model scale out very well with the measurements found on Mercedes' German web site. For some reason, the American C-Class Sports Coupe is very slightly (3 mm) longer.

The unusual 5-spoke wheels supplied on the Herpa model are one of the optional wheels Mercedes offers on the real C230K and are nicely reproduced.

Herpa seems to have learned the same trick that Busch first displayed on their model of the C-Class sedan last year. Headlights are done in such a fashion as to give them the appearance of the real thing, with a mirror-coated back. It's a nice effect and enhances the model's realism. Of course, Busch has now extended that treatment to both front and rear lights and still is the only modelmaker to add minor, but welcome, details like a separate interior rear-view mirror.

Overall, the new C-Class Sports Coupe models are well made and showcase Herpa's abilities in a reasonably priced model that will be a worthwhile addition to any modern passenger car collection or modern-era model railroad layout. In fact, I liked it so much, I bought one for my collection.

023009 Mercedes-Benz C230 Sports Coupe, red standard finish. Suggested Retail \$8.95

033008 Mercedes-Benz C230 Sports Coupe, green metallic finish. Suggested Retail \$9.95

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