

AUTOMOTIVE

Mercedes-Benz celebrates pioneer who drove auto industry into the future

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Bertha Benz was the first person to drive an automobile over a long distance. Image credit: Mercedes-Benz

By SARAH RAMIREZ

German automaker Mercedes-Benz is honoring the woman who is considered the first driver in a new vignette that captures the marque's long legacy of innovation.

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Bertha Benz, the wife of automobile inventor Karl Benz, has long been celebrated in Germany for her own automotive achievements, including completing the first long-distance drive with a production vehicle. In a new short film, Mercedes-Benz is sharing her story with a wider audience while emphasizing its own trailblazing history.

"Using the history of Mercedes-Benz is a great way to show the uniqueness and historical significance of the brand," said Lauren Fix, automotive expert, the [Car Coach](#), Lancaster, NY. "Mercedes-Benz is about creativity."

"Karl Benz built the first car, and his wife brought the name plate to the world," she said. "It was first to market, first in ingenuity and extremely creative."

Ms. Fix is not affiliated with Mercedes, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [Mercedes](#) was reached for comment.

Bertha Benz

"The First Driver" short is a reenactment that follows the style of silent films, with black-and-white footage, instrumental music and title cards to explain key plot points.

The story is set in 1888. Mr. Benz has built his first car, but is too nervous to drive it far. The Patent-Motor-wagen is shown in a barn, with close-ups that linger on the vehicle's early technology.

Mercedes-Benz honors Bertha Benz in a short film

Ms. Benz, however, disagrees with her husband's reluctance. With the help of her sons, Ms. Benz takes the motor wagon out of the barn where it is stored.

Together, they prepare the car for its journey by spinning the wheels and filling the motor with oil. Illustrating the

process in great deal shows how much technology has changed since this first drive.



Bertha Benz drove the first car in 1888. Image credit: Mercedes-Benz

Now alone, Ms. Benz departs on her journey through German country roads.

Along her scenic route, people look at Ms. Benz in awe, surprised at the sight of a car on the road and a woman behind the wheel. In one instance, a young boy tries to run alongside the car but is soon outpaced.

Unfortunately, the motor wagon has some ignition problems and breaks down. The obstacle does not deter Ms. Benz, who uses her ingenuity and her garter belt to repair the vehicle.

The film concludes with Ms. Benz successfully completing her drive. As the titles explain, her journey forged the road for a new industry.

"Bertha Benz was an entrepreneur by proving that anything can be done," Ms. Fix said. "[Her story is] not just important to female drivers, it's important to all drivers."

Humble beginnings

Mercedes-Benz is one of several heritage automotive brands celebrating milestones by looking back at their more humble beginnings. Although Mercedes-Benz was founded in 1926, Ms. Benz went on her first drive 130 years ago in August 1888.

British automaker Bentley Motors began celebrations for its 100th anniversary with a campaign reflecting on its long history of innovation and craftsmanship.

The short film, "Together we are Extraordinary," tells the story of Bentley and its achievements, starting with founder W.O. Bentley. Much like Bentley itself, the new film uses advanced technology to create a striking end result ([see story](#)).

Earlier this year, German automaker Porsche similarly released a film to celebrate its 70 years in service online, following a yearlong celebration from Ferrari for a similar feat. The film touts the family of Porsche owners around the while and the series of bold characteristics that bring them together.

Porsche's video begins in a replica of the garage "where it all started." Doors open and the film moves inward, as if on an educational rollercoaster revealing items from the brand's past, showing a reenactment of a young Ferdinand Porsche standing among his plans ([see story](#)).

"Many drivers are not aware that cars have a significant history that evolves into the product they drive today," Ms. Fix said. "Some come from racing, some coming out of ingenuity and the history is a part of the brand."