

GIANTS IN HELSINKI

The W 21 Cabriolet from 1936 against
the backdrop of Aalto architecture

Mercedes-Benz classic

52



La dolce vita

A town like Sanremo brings out the temperament of **Mandy Grace Capristo**. How much of Italy is there in this beautiful singer? We accompanied her to the floral Riviera in a modern classic – the Mercedes-Benz SLK

TEXT Ina Brzoska

PHOTOS Christian Borth





A leisurely tour around town: Mandy Grace Capristo out and about in Sanremo with an SLK from the R 170 model series





Sporty: Mandy Grace Capristo picking up speed along the Ligurian coast

Manageable: The compact dimensions of the SLK ensure great driving pleasure.



SLK (R 170)

The new, sporty Mercedes-Benz model series R 170 was presented in Turin in 1966.

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At market launch, there were three different engine versions available: most markets could order the SLK 200 and SLK 230 Kompressor models – while in Italy, Portugal and Greece, the more powerful SLK 200 Kompressor was also available.

193 hp/142 kW

was the output of the SLK 230 Kompressor, the top model of the R 170 at the time of its launch in 1996. It had a torque of 280 Nm and a top speed of 231 km/h.

Water ripples from fountains into a baby-blue pool, above which towers the name of the city in nostalgic lettering: Sanremo. A petite beauty poses in the midday sun in front of the fountain. She throws her sandals onto the lawn, pulls up her trouser legs and balances for a while on the edge. Then she jumps into the cold water – and it doesn't take long for a few splashes to head in the direction of the photographer either.

The culprit is singer Mandy Grace Capristo, who was easily persuaded when we offered her a brief trip to Liguria. The aim of the journey was to explore the coast in an SLK – the young classic from the R 170 model series. And what a coast it is. The Vario roof is having a rest in the luggage compartment while the stiff breeze blows around Mandy Grace Capristo's hair, and it is presumably here on this section of the Mediterranean that another iconic motif was born: a certain star in her dream car. The SLK Roadster has precisely that glamour for which Sanremo also stands. It might be an everyday car, but more importantly, it's a car for those special moments – for living life to the full. Mandy Grace Capristo is open to playing with such associations. With a twinkle in her eyes, of course.

The photoshoot with Mandy Grace Capristo doesn't go unnoticed for long. A crowd of Sanremesi soon forms around her and the SLK, inching forward out of curiosity. The men ponder upon where they know the beauty with the frivolous smile from. Is she Italian? Mandy Grace Capristo became famous as a member of the German girl band *Monrose*, into which she was voted as part of the *Popstars* casting show when she was 16. She recorded four studio albums with *Monrose* and the band made seven top-ten hits in the German charts before announcing their splitting up in 2010. Mandy Grace Capristo, now 27 years old, is a singer, influencer and model, as well as being a well-known face abroad too.

Sanremo is used to VIPs. Maria Callas and Frank Sinatra used to be popular guests. Even earlier than that, Cary Grant met Grace Kelly here for a rendezvous. Occasionally, you could see the Duke of Monaco walking along the beach promenade. Another thing that the Sanremesi are crazy about is music. Ever since the 1970s, the great names of Italian pop, rock and folk music have been coming to perform at the Teatro Ariston. Plus, stars like Ed Sheeran, Gianna Nannini or Eros Ramazzotti have already sung at the Festival della Canzone Italiana.

And it comes as no surprise that Mandy Grace Capristo is well known in Sanremo as she recently recorded a duet with Marco Mengoni, a famous Italian star, likewise discovered as part of a casting show. It was the second time that Mandy Grace Capristo has sung a song in Italian. She's currently in the process of improving her knowledge of the language.

"To me, Italy is all about warmth and friendliness," she says. The street musicians, the ice cream sellers, the people you meet in the narrow winding streets of the old town. Mandy Grace Capristo likes the unlimited curiosity of the people as they stroll through the town. There's the local photographer, for example, who asks her for a photo as she walks through the old town of Sanremo. Or the impressively made-up lady sweeping the streets who calls out "Ciao Mandy" after her. A street cleaner who looks as if she's just come out of a beauty salon? "This is the only place you'll find something like that," says Mandy Grace Capristo, laughing. "Everybody has a story to tell, sometimes a bit shamelessly. I love that."

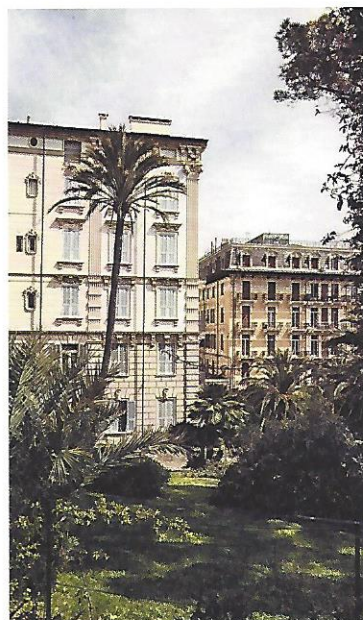
Mandy Grace Capristo was born in Mannheim and grew up in the small village of Bürstadt in Germany's Hesse region. Her father, Vittorio Capristo, a sales representative, comes from Calabria. A typical Italian, she says. Loyal, proud and brilliant at making home-made pasta. He was born on the southernmost tip of the boot, in the little village of Calopezzati. The family spent every summer there, and today the singer thinks back fondly to those carefree times. Gutting fish and family barbecues in the evening.

"Sanremo makes me feel a bit nostalgic, to be quite honest," says Mandy Grace Capristo. But that's just →

The design of the circular instruments takes its cue from the brand's history.



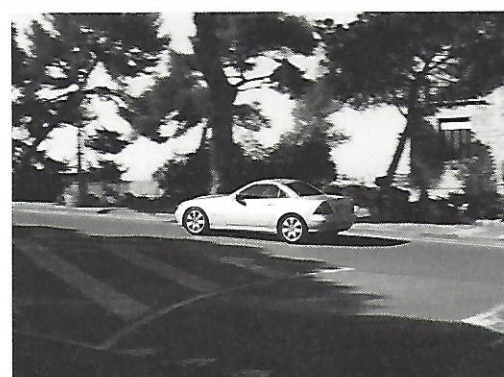
One of the best addresses in town: the Royal Hotel in Sanremo



The 1990 Mercedes-Benz 190 (W201) is shown in the advertisement.



Above: Mandy Grace Capristo in front of the venerable Teatro Ariston, where the Festival della Canzone Italiana de Sanremo has been held since 1977.



The carbon-fibre look was a must-have in the 1990s; the red switch operated the innovative Vario roof.



Stylishly confident: Mandy Grace Capristo in retro look to match the SLK Roadster

what makes the city so charming, she says. A number of grand hotels of the belle époque line the promenade, waiters have that obliging courtesy of the 1950s and 60s, and here and there you can see the rendering peeling off many of the pastel-coloured houses. In the little harbour, luxury yachts float alongside antique-looking fishing boats. "I like this atmosphere and sometimes I think I belong to another decade," says Mandy Grace Capristo. Today, the SLK Roadster still has that feeling of being a dream car, a young classic that fits perfectly into this scenery. When Mercedes-Benz brought out the SLK in 1996, the R 170 model series was something for a new, young and fun-loving clientele. And it was also a pioneer of innovation: the two halves of the steel roof fold together artistically, turning a Coupé into a Roadster whose roof takes some time out in the boot when not in use – all at the push of a button and fully automatically, of course. The SLK was the first vehicle to feature the so-called Varioroof, and became a trendsetter for the entire vehicle industry. With this success, Mercedes-Benz repeated its achievements of the 1950s: building an open-topped dream car that would attract a new circle of customers. When the Mercedes-Benz 190 SL started its world career in 1955, Sanremo was also at the height of its career as a venue for the international jet-set.

"The Italians are right at the forefront when it comes to fashion, architecture and design," says Mandy Grace Capristo. She definitely has a soft spot for aesthetics, and you can feel that when it comes to cars. There's a certain glamour in driving the SLK Roadster from the first R 170 series through Sanremo, explains the signorina. And here you can see the temperament she inherited from her father. "I love putting my foot down," she says. And she can tell a good story about cars. In her new home of Berlin, she recently had problems parking. The Capristo solution is Tetris parking. You locate the smallest parking space on a busy road, ignore the drivers papping their horns and drive in and out of the space 30 to 40 times. "That's how I learned what to do, and with something like that my sense of ambition really comes out," she says. And when she tells stories like that, you also notice her thoroughly likeable love of self-irony.

As to her career, she's a professional today. She was 16 when she had her first hit songs with Monrose. She tells us that she grew up early as a result. That also meant knowing when to say no. "There are people who think you have to live up to superficial clichés. I've always rebelled against that," she says. Now she no longer wants to embody an image dictated to her by other people. She prefers to talk about her search for authenticity in one of her new songs. "You can never know where you are heading if you don't know where you've come from," she says, quoting her father. Two of his principles are "Don't lose face" and "Don't be ruthless." She says, "I think about that before making any decisions."

Stars at the piano: Mandy Grace Capristo and Italian rising star Marco Mengoni recording their duet



Career

Mandy Grace Capristo, born in Mannheim in 1990, has been a solo artist since 2011. Her first album, "Grace" (2012), went straight in at number 8 in the German charts. She then worked with Peter Maffay and Italian rising star Marco Mengoni. She is currently recording her next album in Hamburg and Berlin, the first new single of which will be released later this year.

Her father was conservative with his "Principessa", Mandy Grace Capristo tells us. "I was taught very early on that as a woman I have to watch out." Her first alcoholic drink? "When I was 24 – it was champagne and it tasted disgusting."

And as regards her father and his origins: Calabria, isn't that the home of the 'Ndrangheta? Mandy Grace Capristo smiles knowingly. "My friends always say I've got Mafia blood in my veins. My girlish appearance perhaps hides the fact that I possess a certain cleverness," she says with a wink. Her constant companion in Berlin, by the way, is a pug dog. His name? Don Capone. ▶



Author, Ina Brzoska, was so enchanted by the charm of Sanremo that she immediately organised a Grace Kelly film evening with her friends when she returned.



The SLK

The experts were amazed
and spectators delighted.

In the mid-90s,
Mercedes-Benz reinvented
the Roadster

The story of the new openness began in Italy. At the 1994 Turin Motor Show, Mercedes-Benz presented the pre-series study of a puristic Roadster that incorporated all the safety features of a modern sports car. Two years later at the same venue, the Mercedes-Benz SLK was on show and ready for series production. The letters stood for "sportlich" ("sporty"), "leicht" ("light") and "kurz" ("short").

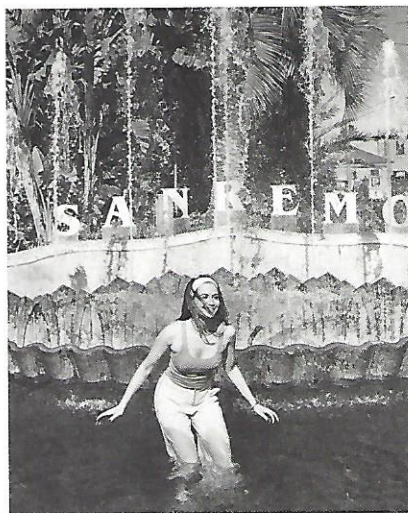
For all its modernity, the new SLK was laden with brand history. Its model designation bears out the fact that it belonged to the family of Mercedes-Benz sports cars that initially chalked up some spectacular racing victories in 1952 under the name of SL ("super leicht", or super light) and – as of 1954 – achieved success on the market that was no less remarkable. And after 1996, the SLK was the second Roadster series after the SL to repeat the success of the 1950s. Back then, the exclusive 300 SL also had a second Roadster model at its side, which offered a lower output: the Mercedes-Benz 190 SL.

The SLK sparked a sensation with all of its features, but also because its developers had given it pioneering innovations. The most striking of these was the Vario roof, which set an example for the whole car industry in the years to come. In place of the folding textile roof which had previously been used, the new model series was given a stable steel roof which could be completely folded away into the luggage compartment. After the electrohydraulic mechanism had proved successful in the SLK, it was also used for the upcoming SL generation of the R 230 model series.

Experts were also very impressed with the return of compressor turbocharging, which Mercedes-Benz had included in the compact SLK model series. It enabled the four-cylinder engine to develop a sporty output with economical fuel consumption and emission values. The four-cylinder unit used in the SLK R 171 model series, which followed in 2004, was also a compressor engine. ▶

OUTFIT TOP: THE ROW, TROUSERS: BEATRICE B

Bon voyage!



Refreshing: Time for a little cool-off?
Mandy Grace Capristo at the fountain pool
in the lunch break

The road along the coast of Liguria is an experience in itself. Motorists driving from Nice towards Sanremo who choose the coastal route experience Liguria from its most impressive side. The sea and the mountains literally collide with one another, ensuring that typically spring-like, fertile climate that gives the coast its wealth of flowers and herbs. For centuries, the inhabitants lived from the vegetables they grew, olive oil, and of course, from fishing. Liguria has retained its original village-like flair to this day. On the route to Sanremo, motorists pass picturesque little villages, young colonies of artists and elegant sea resorts. If you wish, you can take a detour into the mountains, where rock-climbing and hiking routes offer a spectacular view of the Tyrrhenian Sea. So it is not surprising that more than a hundred years ago, nobles from all over Europe chose this section of the coast for their winter residences. Here are six tips from us in and around Sanremo. Don't miss out! ♦



- 1 Sanremo
Royal Hotel
Teatro Ariston
Casino
- 2 Bussana Vecchia
- 3 Sarri
- 4 Capo di Noli

Sleep



**The Royal Hotel
in Sanremo**

ROYAL HOTEL SANREMO

The five-star hotel first opened back in 1872, and is today valued for its timeless charm and its impeccable service. Located only a few minutes from the sea, it offers its guests a sun terrace with a heated sea-water pool and a subtropical park, as well as tennis courts and sports facilities.

royalhotelsanremo.com

Listen



**Mandy Grace Capristo
at the Teatro Ariston**

TEATRO ARISTON

The venerable Teatro Ariston resides in the heart of the old town of Sanremo. Since 1977 it has been the annual venue one of Italy's foremost music festivals, the Festival della Canzone Italiana. Eros Ramazzotti, Patti Smith and Gianna Nannini stand on the stage alongside new young artists.

festivaldellacanzone.it

Look



**The ruins of
Bussana Vecchia**

BUSSANA VECCHIA

This quiet little mountain village is located above the bay of Sanremo. It was so badly damaged by an earthquake in 1887 that its inhabitants had to be relocated. Ever since the 1960s, young artists have worked among the ruins here and they lend the suburb an interesting charm.

bussanavecchia.it

Eating out



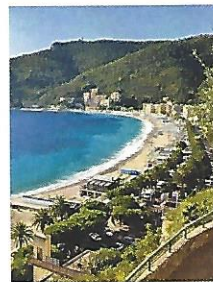
**The excellent Michelin-
star restaurant Sarri**

SARRI

This restaurant was only recently awarded a Michelin star for its modern Italian cuisine. The Sarri restaurant is located about 30 kilometres east of Sanremo. Delicious seafood is presented here in magnificent colourful arrays, and its extensive wine list likewise has an excellent reputation.

ristorantesarri.it

Bathing



**The picturesque bay
of Capo di Noli**

CAPO DI NOLI

If you ask the Sanremesi, they say the village of Noli, about 80 kilometres away, is one of the most beautiful in Italy. Besides a well-preserved old town, its one-kilometre-long beach is ideal for taking a quick dip. Early every morning, fishermen return to the harbour with their catch and display their wares along the promenade.

Playing



**The luxurious casino
in Sanremo**

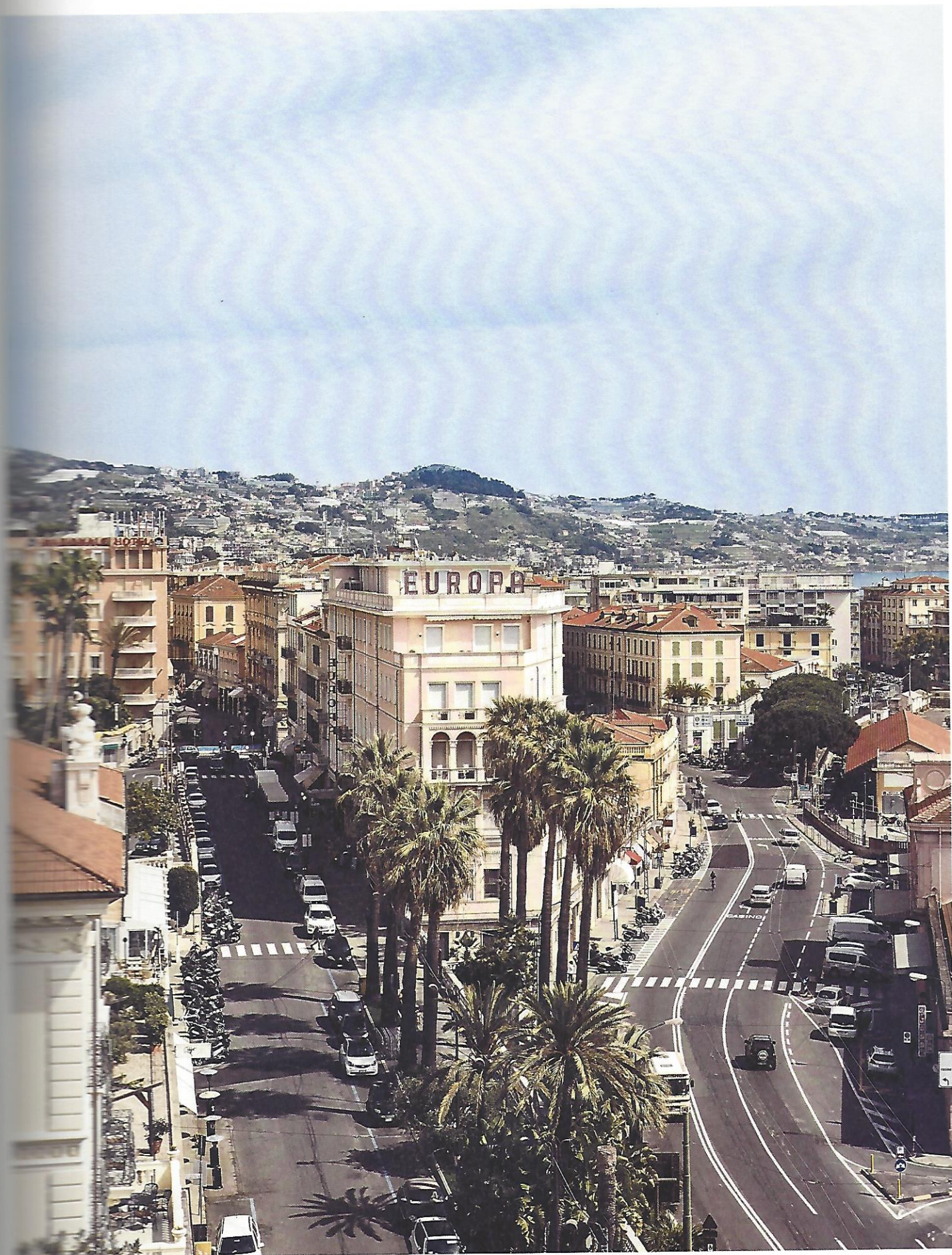
CASINO

The Casino di Sanremo was opened in 1905 and is today one of the most well-known casinos in Italy. Visitors can enjoy American and French roulette, blackjack and punto banco here amidst truly luxurious surroundings. The Texas Hold'em poker tournaments are regularly held at the casino too.

casinosanremo.it



More photos and information about
the journey are available online:
mbmag.me/sanremo2



Sophistication: Grand hotels from the belle époque define the character of the Sanremo townscape.