

# RENNTECH

## SL740 JUST A SIMPLE 575-HP \$200,000 V-12 MERCEDES

ROADSTER/by John Pearley Huffman

PHOTOS BY PLANET-R/RANDY LORENTZEN

RENNTech's SL740 exaggeration of Mercedes' SL600 V-12 roadster is everything except dramatic. Where others loudly slug themselves to 12-second elapsed times in the quarter mile, this droptop does it as if it were silently steaming a crisp pleat into wool trousers. This is the perfect car for anyone who wants to get to 100 mph and back to a dead stop in only 15 seconds without ever breaking a sweat, breathing hard, or even increasing the driver's pulse. This a fast car for which your cardiologist

could write a prescription. And a heart transplant may be one of the few more expensive things in life.

This is the engine for those who found the 7.0-liter V-12 RENNTech (Dept. MT, 1369 North Killian Dr., Lake Park, FL 33403; 561/845-7888) offered in *MT*'s "Raw Power" test last year (Mar. '96) tame. Owner Hartmut Feyhl's technicians start with the basic 6.0-liter/389-horsepower DOHC 48-valve Mercedes V-12 and expand its capacity by increasing each cylinder's bore from 89 mm in diameter to 91 mm, and enlarging the

stroke from 80.2 mm to 95 mm to result in 7.4 liters of total displacement. Beyond that, they lash the pistons to the crank with titanium rods, install intake and exhaust valves that are each 1 mm larger in diameter than stock into CNC-machined, ported, and polished cylinder heads. From there, they add RENNTech's own secret blend of camshafts, let it breathe through a special air filter housing, reprogram the computer, bump up the radiator in size, hook up an external oil cooler, let it exhale through a hand-formed stainless-steel exhaust, and fidget with the transmission valve bodies. Among all that, what's perhaps most surprising is what doesn't change: The compression ratio stays at the Mercedes-spec 10.0:1.

Feyhl claims the engine makes 575 horsepower at 6000 rpm and tosses out a stunning 594 pound-feet of torque at 4000 rpm. What that means in real life is that, from the moment the car is started and settles into its silent idle to the time it tops out at nearly 180 mph, there's enough torque to reverse the Hoover Dam's turbines and force water back up into Lake Mead. In fact, there's so much utterly serene torque present that one could almost imagine leaving the car in fourth and gutting out the mecha-







Despite the insane power on hand, the SL740's interior is a paragon of serenity no matter what the speed.



Peering into the engine bay, there's little that distinguishes RENNTech's SL740 from the standard-issue SL600. Most engine modifications are internal, and everything is covered by Mercedes' standard shrouding.

nisms for the other three forward gears. But in fact the transmission works wonderfully with crisp, satisfyingly muted shifts; and Feyhl claims the five-speed automatic used in the current SL600 is even better than the four-cogger of this '93-based test car.

Beyond the engine work, this particular Benz was also treated to 14-inch-diameter front and rear Alcon slotted and vented disc brakes, oversize anti-roll bars, a 1-inch reduction in ride height, modified rear suspension with additional links, and 245/40ZR18 front and 285/35ZR18 rear Michelin Pilot SX MXX3 radials on O.Z. Racing modular wheels. The most compelling external

evidence of the power that lurks within is the incorporation of the vent from an E420 toward the leading edge of the SL's hood. The E-series vent looks quite natural in the SL hood and helps somewhat in maintaining airflow through the densely packed engine compartment.

Keep in mind that SL600s weigh more than 4400 pounds (about the same as a two-wheel-drive Chevy Tahoe), which makes the performance of the SL740 even more stunning. The trip from 0 to 60 mph takes just 4.4 seconds and the quarter mile is slaughtered in 12.7 seconds at 114.2 mph. That's quicker than any other street-bound vehicle equipped with an automatic transmission *Motor Trend* has ever tested. That's 1.3 seconds quicker to 60 and 1.5 seconds swifter in the quarter mile than the last stock V-12 Mercedes SL600 we tested. All that despite the very tall 2.65:1 standard final-drive ratio (albeit abetted by a limited-slip differential).

With the standard traction control

turned on, there's almost no way to get the car out of shape in handling maneuvers, short of trying something truly stupid. The steering has the expected Mercedes disdain for communication with the driver, the suspension soaks up everything thrown at it except spilled grape juice, and if the structure were any more solid, you could have a jeweler cut facets into it. You don't feel speed as much as relentlessness, an ever-present determination to maintain maniacal velocities without interrupting the delicate seduction going on between Armani-clad driver and Versace-encased, opposite-sex passenger.

Price is a relative thing. RENNTech charges \$46,570 for the engine work, and the limited-slip differential alone is a staggering \$6500. Add up all the work on this car and it comes to \$77,500—plus a \$123,200 SL600 to start with. And while to most of us, that's the price of a house, to RENNTech's customers it's just so much fuel for the new Citation X corporate jet.

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## PERFORMANCE

	Stock '95 Mercedes-Benz SL600	RENNTech SL740
ACCELERATION, mph		
0-30	2.4	1.8
0-40	3.3	2.5
0-50	4.4	3.4
0-60	5.7	4.4
0-70	7.2	5.5
0-80	9.2	6.9
0-90	11.5	8.5
0-100	14.0	10.5
1/4 MILE, sec/mph	14.2/100.9	12.7/114.2
SLALOM, 600-ft, mph	62.8	64.5
LATERAL ACCEL, g	0.84	0.87