



SPECIALTY FILE

# RENNTech SLR7.4

Purchasing power.

BY BARRY WINFIELD

If ever you see a Metallic Emerald Green Mercedes-Benz SL600 with unusual bodywork, two-piece O-Z wheels, and a green fabric top, do not attempt to drag-race it. Not unless you have a car you know will get to 60 in less than four seconds and beat 12.4 seconds in the quarter-mile with a terminal speed above 117 mph, because this Mercedes will run those numbers, and perhaps better ones now that its engine has loosened up. When we tested this RENNTech SLR7.4 (named for the legendary race cars, whose acronym works equally well here as *sportlich, leicht, RENNTech*, and for its unusual displacement), it had about 100 miles on the engine-conversion parts. Which—with new crank, con rods, pistons, rings, and valve gear—is every rubbing surface in the V-12.

They get quicker as they are broken in, insists RENNTech founder Hartmut Feyhl, and we're not arguing the point. This car, at just over 4000 pounds, already performs as well as an 8.0-liter V-10 Viper GTS weighing 700 pounds less. Of course, before it would do so, the car's owner had to spend somewhere around \$200,000 for the work RENNTech did on it. And no, Leroy, that does not include the SL600's \$134,166 purchase price.

But what price exclusivity? The owner of this SLR7.4 had his pilot fly him in to pick it up, and he drove it home in 17 hours, after which he pronounced it quite satisfactory. *Cha-ching!* Another satisfied cus-

tom. One who owns two other RENNTech-modified Benzes, as it happens, which ought to tell us something about the value of Feyhl's work.

That work includes an engine bored out from 89 to 91 millimeters, and stroked from 80.2 to 95 millimeters by means of a custom billet crankshaft, titanium connecting rods, and Kolbenschmidt pistons. Now sucking 7410cc worth of atmosphere—1423 more than before—the engine needed a few breathing upgrades. One of them was having the heads flowed and ported by CNC Cylinder Heads of Pinellas Park, Florida. Another required the alloy intake manifold—





which has some of its tubes crimped by the need to fit under a stock hood—to be cut open so that the offending runners could be enlarged to the right bore. (A carbon-fiber hood with more clearance accommodates the pumped-up plumbing.) Then the manifold was matched to the ports. Bigger, lighter, thinner-stemmed valves from the Judd F1 engine were fitted, along with high-lift camshafts ground from Mercedes blanks.

Feyhl notes that the stock SL600 exhaust system is somewhat restrictive in the interests of serviceability, so he went in and changed that to a system that now breathes and growls most satisfactorily. He then fitted K & N air filters to reduce intake restriction, and about all that was left was to dyno-mount the engine, punch in some custom engine-management software codes, and watch the dynamometer readings climb—past 600 pound-feet at 4000 rpm, according to Feyhl, and to a peak of 585 horsepower at 6000 rpm.

Reading those numbers immediately brings to mind the plight of the transmission. Here RENNTech modified the four-speed automatic to increase its torque-handling capacity, and tuned it for faster, firmer shifts. A RENNTech valve body was fitted—one that selects first gear for start-off to improve acceleration. Which it does, but the towering torque of this engine does far, far more. Brake-torque this puppy while applying full throttle, and the car will wheelspin throughout first gear—despite the huge 325/35ZR-18 Michelins hugging the rear rims. It might have smoked well into second gear, too, had we not realized in time that this was not the way to quick times.

The best results were obtained with a little brake torquing and enough throttle to put 2000 rpm on the dial. Then you release the brake and squeeze the throttle on as the car rolls out. Get this right, and the car will crack off four-second runs to 60, with a relentless push in the back all the way to the redline at 6150 rpm in every gear. Actually, the power builds noticeably as the revs rise, and the car will run 200 rpm



over 6000 before the computer tugs on the reins. This means that in top gear the SLR should pull briefly to 180 mph before the electronics trim it back to 178 mph. We had no facilities to verify that, but Feyhl vows that he saw an indicated 180 mph, although he'd probably change that story in court.

To match the chassis performance to the Promethean driveline, RENNTech replaced the original adaptive shocks with fully adjustable Konis, fitted its own rear suspension links (which cancel the serious toe-in antics of the original equipment), and added higher-rate springs and bars. The ultracool magnesium O-Z wheels are made-to-order replicas of the equipment found

on Ferrari 333SP WSC and McLaren F1 GTS-1 racers, wrapped in acres of Michelin Pilot MXX3 rubber. Inside the expensive alloy spokes you can see gigantic 14-inch vented and slotted rotors with four-piston aluminum Alcon calipers in front and 12-inch equivalents out back—enough stopping power to pull the 4100-pound car from 70 mph to rest in 172 feet.

Inside, the SLR has custom Recaro seats that actually afford better legroom for this writer than the stock equipment. Carbon fiber covers every surface that used to be wood, and there's a special leather dash that has a dark patch placed carefully ahead of the driver to prevent glaring reflections in the windshield. As with everything else on the car, the original Mercedes flavor is retained. In essence, the RENNTech SLR is still very much an SL—but an SL you should avoid trying to beat when the light turns green. ●

*RENNTech, 1369 North Killian Drive, Lake Park, Florida 33403; 407-845-7888.*

#### RENNTech SLR7.4

**Vehicle type:** front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, 2-door roadster

**Estimated price as tested:** \$334,500

**Engine type:** DOHC 48-valve V-12, aluminum block and heads, Bosch/RENNTech engine-control system with port fuel injection

Displacement	.....	452 cu in, 7410cc
Power (mfr's rating)	.....	585 bhp @ 6000 rpm
Torque (mfr's rating)	.....	601 lb-ft @ 4000 rpm
Transmission	.....	4-speed automatic
Wheelbase	.....	99.0 in
Length	.....	178.0 in
Curb weight	.....	4100 lb
Zero to 60 mph	.....	4.0 sec
Zero to 100 mph	.....	9.1 sec
Zero to 120 mph	.....	13.1 sec
Street start, 5-60 mph	.....	4.5 sec
Standing 1/4-mile	.....	12.4 sec @ 117 mph
Top speed (mfr's claim)	.....	180 mph
Braking, 70-0 mph	.....	172 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft-dia skidpad	.....	0.85 g

## What's New in WeatherTech® Cargo Liners



Accord



Lexus LS 400



Mercedes "E" Class



Volvo 850



Tahoe/Yukon



'96 Grand Caravan