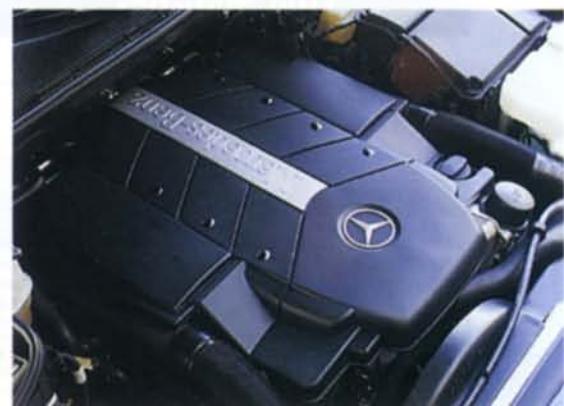


RENNTech ML60RS



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Maybe AMG and Lorinser should steal a page from RENNtech and completely reengineer the suspension. Hartmut Feyhl's Florida firm dropped the ML60RS a full three inches, added dual-adjustable Koni coil-over shocks, and then shod it with two-piece O-Z Futura lace wheels (9.5 by 20 inches) wrapped with BFGoodrich Comp T/A 295/40ZR-20 tires. Skinned of its roof rack, the lower-than-low ML60RS looks like a Hovercraft.

But, Feyhl explained, because there is so much droop built into the SUV's suspension geometry, once you lower it more than a couple of inches, it's necessary to relocate the upper-control-arm pickup points, which he has done (kids, don't try this at home).

The result feels less sport-ute than sports car—a Ferrari SUV. "The driving feel approaches perfection," noted one of many rhapsodic log entries. "Very subtle shock tuning. Almost creamy over smooth roads yet muscular control of body motions when needed."

Out on the open range, in vast sweepers



at supernumerary speeds, the ML60RS tracks like a bobsled with nary a niggle of body roll. Even with 20-inch BFGs, the RENNtech's steering was linear and precise, preserving the oily smoothness of the

stock rack-and-pinion. The ML60RS spanked the lane-change test, tripping the lights at 58.6 mph (second fastest was the Lorinser at 57.2 mph) and registering a prodigious 0.86 g on the skidpad.

Yet for all its dynamic prowess, the ML60RS's stock in trade is horsepower, great whacking gobs of it, for which RENNTECH charges great whacking gobs of money: \$49,900 just for the engine upgrades.

RENNTECH begins with a Mercedes 5.0-liter block with a 97-millimeter bore and reams it out to 100mm, preserving the low-friction silicon-aluminum surface using a special proprietary process. Then it adds a billet-steel crank with colossal titanium con rods, bringing the stroke up to just under 95mm for a total displacement of 5954cc.

Aggressive camshafts, high-performance K & N air filters, an external oil cooler, reprogrammed engine-management software, and a custom DOM stainless exhaust system round out the mods.

The tally is 408 naturally aspirated horsepower at 5800 rpm and 464 pound-feet of torque leveled off between 2400 and 5000 rpm, enough to launch the 4562-pounder to 60 mph in a crackling 5.2 seconds. RENNTECH exploits the fact that in these Merc three-valvers torque doesn't peak so much as plateau right across the rpm range. We were suitably dumbfounded by the top-gear 30-to-50-mph

time of 2.8 seconds. "Huge power is everywhere, anytime," a test driver wrote.

"When the engine lights, you know you are in the presence of greatness," wrote another test driver of the RENNTECH's distinctive, throaty growl.

In the interest of balance, the RENNTECH's brakes are likewise colossal: 15-inch front and 14-inch rear discs answering to Brembo four-piston calipers.

Complaints? We had a few. The FAB aero kit the RENNTECH wears is a little sophomoric. And then there is the price, which will buckle your knees like a shot of poisoned tequila: \$136,991.

Vital Statistics

	price, base* / as tested	engine	SAE net power/torque	curb weight, pounds	tires	brakes, front/rear	braking, 70-0 mph, feet
MERCEDES-BENZ ML55 AMG	\$65,495 / \$65,495	SOHC 24-valve V-8, 332 cu in (5439cc), aluminum block and heads, Bosch ME 2.0 engine-control system with port fuel injection	342 bhp @ 5500 rpm / 376 lb-ft @ 3000 rpm	4913	Dunlop SP Sport 9000; 285/50WR-18	13.6-inch vented disc, 4-piston caliper / 13.0-inch disc, 4-piston caliper	178
LORINSER K43	\$67,740 / \$89,391 (1999)	supercharged SOHC 24-valve V-8, 260 cu in (4266cc), aluminum block and heads, Bosch ME 2.0 engine-control system with port fuel injection	349 bhp @ 5900 rpm / 376 lb-ft @ 4000 rpm	4626	Dunlop SP Sport 9000; 295/40ZR-20	14.0-inch vented and cross-drilled disc, Brembo 4-piston caliper / 13.0-inch vented and cross-drilled disc, Brembo 4-piston caliper	168
RENNTECH ML60RS	\$110,740 / \$136,991 (1999)	SOHC 24-valve V-8, 363 cu in (6954cc), aluminum block and heads, Bosch/RENNTECH engine-control system with port fuel injection	408 bhp @ 5800 rpm / 464 lb-ft @ 2400 rpm	4562	BFGoodrich Comp T/A; 295/40ZR-20	15.0-inch vented and grooved disc, Brembo 4-piston caliper / 14.0-inch vented and grooved disc, Brembo 4-piston caliper	172
STILLEN GTM 430 S/C	\$63,279 / \$98,875 (1999)	supercharged SOHC 24-valve V-8, 260 cu in (4266cc), aluminum block and heads, Bosch ME 2.0 engine-control system with port fuel injection	358 bhp @ 5850 rpm / 318 lb-ft @ 3950 rpm	4751	Yokohama AVS S/T Type-1; 285/50VR-18	13.4-inch vented and cross-drilled disc, AP Racing 6-piston caliper / 13.0-inch cross-drilled disc, stock 1-piston caliper	181

*Base price includes all performance-enhancing options.

	acceleration, seconds							roadholding, 300-foot skidpad, g	emergency-lane-change maneuver, mph	fuel economy, mpg, C/D 350-mile trip
	0-30 mph	0-60 mph	0-100 mph	1/4-mile	street start, 5-60 mph	top gear, 30-50 mph	top gear, 50-70 mph			
MERCEDES-BENZ ML55 AMG	2.5	6.5	17.1	15.1 @ 94 mph	6.7	3.5	4.1	0.75	54.3	15
LORINSER K43	3.1	7.5	20.1	15.9 @ 89 mph	7.4	4.1	4.5	0.79	57.2	14
RENNTECH ML60RS	1.7	5.2	15.5	14.3 @ 97 mph	5.3	2.8	3.6	0.86	58.6	15
STILLEN GTM 430 S/C	3.4	8.2	22.1	16.5 @ 87 mph	7.9	4.2	4.7	0.79	52.9	15

*Base price includes all performance-enhancing options.