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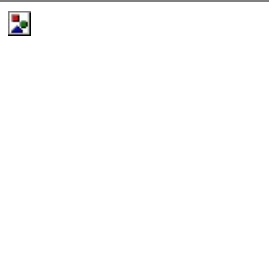
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Mercedes-Benz Roadster

Power on the road is just as satisfying as in the boardrooms.

by **Ralph McGill Jr.**
March 1, 2008

You don't have to be an Indy 500 racing star like Danica Patrick to feel a certain need for speed behind the wheel of an automobile. No longer are women automatically choosing the slow, safe minivan/station wagon/micro-compact route. For decades women's struggles for power have been waged in the boardrooms and typing pools, and, of course, much progress has been made. Now women are demanding power in all aspects of their lives. Including cars.

Fortunately, you don't have to wrestle snorting, roaring behemoths to reach the pinnacle of speed and power. Presenting the Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG. Clothed in gorgeous sheet metal, and appointed with all the comforts and conveniences you might imagine, it is hard to believe it's one kick-derriere performance machine. Its predecessors were originally tagged weak sisters in the sports car hierarchy. Variousy labeled as a "doctor's wife's car" or other patronizing putdowns, the SL roadster has evolved into a fire-eating, two-seater convertible/hardtop that outperforms just about every car on the planet.



Powered with an astounding 604 horsepower turbocharged V-12 engine backed with a verging-on-unbelievable 738 foot pounds of torque, this drop-top roadster is quite possibly the most powerful street automobile in the United States. There's enough power here to launch the somewhat hefty SL to 60 mph in a Ferrari-like 4.1 seconds. Up to a top speed exceeding 155 mph.

Of course, absolute power comes at a price, and for the SL65 AMG, that's just north of \$180,000. Plus tax. That affords you an auto that's hand-built at the AMG engine facility by a single specialist, and the V-12 is signed by that craftsman. The SL65 AMG is the first Mercedes/AMG product to be fitted with a limited-slip rear differential. (Drag racers know that's the key to a successful stoplight launch.) At all four corners, AMG wheels hold huge and grippy 19 inch tires.



Many fast and powerful cars are irritatingly difficult to drive in a rough, bad-boy racer kind of way. The Mercedes is, on the other hand, about as refined a machine as you will find. The interior is as tailored as a Prada handbag. And little refinements are welcome. Including surprisingly low doorsills for such a low-slung car. It allows for effortless egress, simply by swinging the legs out.

You can quibble about the practicality of the instrumentation - the Germans tend to design buttons that are beautiful but impossible to read. The navigation system is fabulous - if you can ever figure out how to turn it on. We eventually did.



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One practical note is that most purpose-built performance cars come without the manufacturer's warranty - not so the 65SL AMG. You don't sacrifice practicality for exclusivity.

Of course, those of practical mind might question the need for a car that can exceed the posted speed limit three times over, but you can always answer that powerful cars, like powerful women, don't need an excuse.

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