

Top dog

AMG also made V8 W124s, the ultimate variant of which was the 6-litre, 376bhp E60 AMG, writes Ian Kuah



An AMG tweaked E500, the E60 was an awesome piece of kit.

Mercedes-Benz car model ranges and engine families do not always stay in synch, and a prime example of this is the M119 32-valve V8, one of the strongest and most powerful engines Mercedes ever built. Its marriage with the famously sturdy W124 E-Class produced a succession of fabulous Q-cars, the rarest, most exclusive and fastest being the E60 AMG.

The M119 engine family was launched with the R129 SL in 1989 and evolved through two generations of E-Class model. This first version, internally coded M119 960, was fuelled by the Bosch CIS KE-Jetronic injection system. What is not widely known is that AMG build the last few Hammers (the original V8 W124, predating the 500E/E500) with this motor rather than the outgoing M117 motor, and also developed a marine version! The latter seemed a natural development considering that a marine version of the AMG 32-valve M117 motor had been developed in 1986.

With no real technical issues to blot its copybook from day one, the M119 motor was not only reliable, it also had plenty of

'meat' in its block for the tuners to carve out enlarged displacement versions. In 1998 Brabus managed to squeeze 6,409cc out of the pre-1996 version of the M119, with 101mm pistons and a new long-throw crank. The result was a mighty 450bhp at 5,900rpm and 489lb/ft of torque at 3,800rpm. However, AMG had to be more conservative for reasons of long-term reliability. As such the E60 AMG had to meet all the test regimes that applied to a standard Mercedes-Benz production model and carry the same warranty.

The second generation of M119 motor came along in 1991 and was designated M119.970 LH in the S-Class, M119.972 LH in the R129 SL500 and M119.974 LH in the E500, the last two letters denoting the Bosch LH-Jetronic fuel-injection with its hot wire system. This block was about 10mm lower in deck height than the later M119.980 Motronic version.

The 970 block was the version upon which AMG based its E60 engine and this

base motor was also used in the V8 version of the CLK GTR in both 5-litre and 6-litre forms. The internal engine family code for this enlarged displacement 32-valve motor was M119.974 6.0 and the AMG E500 6.0 was a W124.036. The longer throw crankshaft of the E60 motor was from the previous generation M117 V8, as used in the W126 560 S-Class and SEC cars, with some minor machining to make it fit.

A NUMBERS GAME

Using 100mm diameter pistons, coupled to a 94.8mm stroke, the swept capacity became 5,956cc. The early motors had a 10.4:1 compression ratio, but this was soon reduced to 10:1 after some early cars suffered engine damage through variable fuel quality outside Germany. Although these early cars had knock sensors, the electronics were simply not fast enough to cope compared with today's virtually real time ECUs.

Apart from the greater displacement, the AMG modifications included ported and gas-flowed cylinder-heads, intake manifolds and higher-lift intake and

**"OUTPUT WAS
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Mercedes-Benz E60 AMG
 ENGINE 5,956cc V8
 POWER 376bhp@5,600rpm
 TORQUE 428lb/ft@3,750rpm
 TRANSMISSION 4-speed auto
 WEIGHT 1,710kg
 0-62MPH 5.2sec
 TOP SPEED 155mph (limited)
 PRODUCED 1993-1994



exhaust cams. A sports exhaust with less back-pressure also boosted horsepower and torque. And of course the ECU software was re-programmed to make full use of the engine's bigger lungs and enhanced combustion capability.

The resulting output was 376bhp at 5,500rpm with 428lb/ft at 3,750rpm. This was enough to propel the 1,710kg E60 to 0-62mph in 5.2 seconds, nearly a second quicker than the 322bhp E500. 0-124mph (200km/h) took 19.8 seconds and the standing kilometre was covered in 24.5 seconds.

Top speed was 175mph with 5,700rpm on the clock although, if the car was delimited, 187.5mph (300km/h) was

possible. Towards the end of the W124 production life, AMG made a very limited 'by special request only' version of the E60 with 399bhp at 5,750rpm and 454lb/ft at 3,810rpm.

GIANT KILLER

Bear in mind that cars like the Lamborghini Diablo weighed 1,700kg as well, and you realize just how potentially quick the AMG E60 was as a four-door Q-car. And of course the automatic gearbox took the possibility of a muffled shift out of the equation, giving you every chance of demolishing the ego of some poor Ferrari driver at the traffic light Grand Prix!

The four-speed automatic gearbox used

Top: Interior is solid rather than sporty.

Above: Purposeful stance means business.

on the stock E500 seemed to be capable of absorbing the extra power and torque with no problems. However, many hard drivers considered the standard 500E/E500 brakes marginal. Even though the E500 gained the bigger brakes from the SL (300x28mm with four-pot callipers in front, 278x24mm with two pots at the rear) at facelift in 1993, these were tested under hard use, so the larger 320x30mm and 300x24mm brakes fitted to the E60 were most welcome. Wheels were the three-piece AMG alloys, 8.5Jx17-inch ET30 all-round, shod with 245/45ZR17 tyres.

By the time W124 E-Class production ceased in late 1994,

From left: Trim as per E500 limited; ditto the wheels; engine is rather more special.



Mercedes was ready to launch the third generation of M119 motor. The engine used in the early W210 E-Class models was the Type M119 980, fuelled by the more advanced Bosch ME 1.0 Motronic management system. This final version of the M119 motor was accompanied by the new electronically controlled five-speed automatic transmission.

Being based on the very well sorted

"A PHENOMENAL TRANS-CONTINENTAL TOOL FOR FOUR TO GO VERY RAPIDLY"

500E/E500, the AMG E60 had a slightly updated version of the Porsche-tuned chassis, ASR, ABS and the 90-litre fuel tank. That made it a phenomenal trans-continental tool for four to go very rapidly in comfort with none of the scary handling and short range of the AMG Hammer.

The German version had a 2.56:1 rear differential, and the only variation on this was the Swiss version, which had a shorter 2.82 differential in view of their speed limits. That of course makes the Swiss E60 quicker through the gears!

RARE BIRD

In the pre-Mercedes-AMG days, exact production records are a bit sketchy. According to best estimates the car pictured is one of only 12 E60 Limited cars built by the tuner, based on the E500 Limited and hence the rarest of the rare. Overall sources indicate a total of 126 E60s were built, including these special editions.

Although the AMG E60 was actually announced as a US market model, it never officially made it across the Atlantic. That did not stop a few private individuals importing cars though and a few are still occasionally seen on the freeways. Along with the 500Es and E500s, these are highly coveted cars. We also know that AMG built a few E500 T models (estates) for their clients and it is believed that some of these were E60s.

A few E60s also made it to Japan, where they are sought after collectors' cars today. Japanese car enthusiasts have a very strong affiliation for classic factory AMG cars, and you'll see E500s and AMG E60s being advertised for sale by upmarket specialist companies in Japanese car magazines.

If you were ordering an AMG E60 from your dealer in 1994, with a Sapphire Blue (Saphirschwarz) E500 Limited as the base vehicle, there are three order codes you would have signed up to. S09 referred to

The E60 is in its element on the autobahn as you'll see from the speedo...



DRIVING THE ULTIMATE BEHIND THE WHEEL OF AMG'S V8 W124

Like an E500 but more so, the E60 AMG takes the V8 E-Class experience to new heights

It may seem obvious but the E60's driving experience is only significantly separated from that of the E500 by its astonishing engine. From the seating position and instrumentation to its handling and braking, it would take intimate knowledge of both cars followed by back to back comparison to spot anything other than the different leather trim, and then it would probably just be down to the condition of the particular examples tested.

The E60 is supremely comfortable and goes about its work in the same hassle-free manner as all the powerful W124s. That's no bad thing at all, in fact it's what makes this without doubt the ultimate W124 E-Class experience. Twist the powerplant into life and the product of the monstrous unit's output is simply greater depth to the W124's personality. This is not a case of Mr Hyde to the rest of the range's Dr Jekyll. Suitably subtle inputs to the accelerator

generate the expected refined and typically Mercedes-like results.

But there is another side to it. Give the throttle a sustained, hard shove and the outcome is far closer to the thoroughly modern and prodigiously powerful AMG cars we know and love today. While there's no big thump in your back, the E60 picks you up with an unceasing flow of power and forces you forward with deliberate and seamless acceleration. It's less like being fired from a canon than being hurled from a slingshot.

The added bonus with the E60 is that the fun just keeps on going. At every speed there's tangibly more pull than in the E500, particularly around UK motorway speeds and beyond, should you have the luxury of an autobahn at your disposal. Hitting the 155mph limit is no bother at all and an experience to be savoured again and again. *Jason Simms*

Just as subtle as the E500 but with even greater performance.

the stunning paintjob applied to these cars while one of three leather codes – 286, 287 or 288 according to colour choice – and one of two trim codes (732 for Bird's Eye Maple or 731 for Walnut) covered the interior options. 658 was the wheels but the one you really wanted was 957, the code for "AMG Technik", making

the car a W124.036 Code 957 or, more simply, an E60 AMG. All this came at a price – the cost in Germany at the time coming to DM200,000 or around £66,000. An expensive car for expensive tastes but one with all the attractions of any other W124 E-Class and a few more besides!

