



Bigger wheels suit the E420 better and improve handling.

New shoes and a little pressure

With 5,000 miles under its belt since purchase, Reed Hitchcock's E420 is delivering the goods

FACTSHEET

CAR 1994 E420

OWNER Reed Hitchcock

LOCATION Virginia, USA

PURCHASED May 2004

UPDATES SINCE LAST REPORT Oiler tube replacement (\$1,100), new 16-inch wheels

Actually, the title is a little misleading. It should read "and no pressure" for that is how my oil gauge read at idle as I sat waiting for my sandwich and Diet Coke at the McDonalds drive-up window. Then I noticed this odd ticking sound. Not good.

To date I have added 5,000 miles to the 81,000 the E420 came with when I bought it in May. My trip to St. Louis for the M100 Group Lode Star Fest (Mercedes Enthusiast, August 2004) in June was flawless and my daily grind of a commute has been downright pleasant most of the time. Generally speaking, I love this car!

And then this. Some research on the internet (namely www.mercedeshop.com) pointed me to the most likely culprit, namely the black plastic oiler tubes under the valve cover that have a nasty habit of blowing their (also plastic) caps. I rang my trusted wrench, Peter Fuchs, at Silver Star Motors in Vienna, Virginia with the self-

diagnosis, and he suggested I bring the car in for a "professional" opinion.

I am pleased to report that my diagnosis was spot-on! One of the tubes had indeed blown its plastic cap clear off, resulting in the low pressure and ticking noise I had reported. The down side was Peter's recommendation to "preventatively" replace all eight of them. And although I know he was right the dollar side of the equation was frightening: \$1,100 to remove and replace the oiler tubes, including parts, labour, and miscellaneous parts that had cracked with age.

Since I've had the car back the pressure at idle reads about 1.5-2.0 bar and the V8 runs as silently and smoothly as new. I'll be keeping my fingers crossed.

TYRES AND WHEELS TO SUIT

A resounding theme in everything I've

read on the W124 400E/E420's is that the stock 15-inch wheels and 195/65/15 tyres, while adequate for the six-cylinder cars, are simply overpowered by the V8. After driving mine for a few weeks I agreed with this assessment.

"IF YOU'VE EVER SHOPPED FOR WHEELS YOU'LL KNOW THAT THE NUMBER OF CHOICES IS STAGGERING"

Thus I began my quest for the right package. I knew I wanted 16-inch wheels wearing 205/55/16 tyres

but which ones? If you've ever shopped for wheels you'll know that the number of choices is staggering. I found a website offering one of those "here's how these wheels will look on your car" tools and began exploring different configurations. After sorting through the sea of tacky and over-the-top designs I decided I like the look of the standard wheels best. Thus I went with a 16x7.5 version of the 8-hole alloys already fitted to the car, maintaining the stock appearance but giving me the extra meat on the road.

For tyres I wanted high-performance all-seasons. Michelin Pilot Sport A/S are great tyres but, at over \$160 each, they are just too rich for my blood. I settled on a set of Kumho Ecsta ASX W-rated (168 mph). At \$70 each they were a downright bargain and the experience to date has been exemplary. Here's to the free market.

Broken oil feeder tube caused pressure drop and led to costly repair bill.

