

POCKET-SIZED PICKUPS: We test five of the best!

CAR AND DRIVER

AUGUST 1998 • CANADA \$4.50 UK £2.30 US \$3.50

0 to 150 to 0

The new performance standard

The Ultimate Comparison

*Kenny Brown 289RS Cobra
Hennessey Venom 600GTS
Lingenfelter 415 ZR-1 • RENNTech SLR7.4
Saleen S351 • Steeda Q • SVSi Viper RT/10
Acura NSX • BMW 540i Sport
Chevy Camaro Z28 SS • Chevy Corvette
Dodge Viper GTS • Jaguar XJR • Porsche 911*

NEW: Jeep Grand Cherokee, 349-hp Mercedes E55 AMG.

CONVERTIBLES: Chevy Cavalier, Mercedes CLK, Volvo C70.

TESTED: Chevy Silverado, Ford F-350, VW New Beetle TDI.



RENNTech SLR7.4

Performance perfection at a prodigal price.

Any *Car and Driver* super-speedfest would be incomplete without one of Hartmut Feyhl's German jato sleds. Feyhl, formerly of super-tuner AMG in Germany and now owner of Florida-based RENNTech Performance Tuning, raises the modification of Mercedes-Benzes to a high art form. His cars are blindingly fast, rock-solid reliable, and aesthetically exquisite. They are aristocratic hot rods.

We tested this SLR7.4 when it was fresh out of open-engine surgery in March 1997. The operation bored and stroked the V-12 from its original 6.0 liters to 7.4 and greatly enhanced its ability to breathe, with an enlarged and polished intake manifold and bigger valves. The engine mods are worth \$50,000 and are warranted for two years. A mellifluous high-flow RENNTech exhaust adds 10 grand. Another \$5000 beefs up the transmission and adds a super-duty radiator and auxiliary coolers for the engine oil and transmission fluid. The bottom line: 585 hp at 6000 rpm; 601 pound-feet at 4000 rpm (up from 389 and 420). A \$10,000 Torsen differential with a 2.82:1 ratio ensures equitable distribution of that immense torque.

Those mods, plus a reduction in curb weight of nearly 400 pounds, take care of getting to 150 mph. All the driver must do is brake-torque to just off idle, say, 1500 revs, and then coax the

throttle down. Easy does it, or those giant 295/35ZR-18 Pirellis will vaporize. Zero to 60 takes 3.7 seconds. Precisely. Run after run. Times to 150 mph varied by less than a second over four runs. Such rare repeatability speaks to the precision craftsmanship that is RENNTech's hallmark, earning the SLR7.4 a perfect score for durability.

A glance at the time-to-speed graph (page 45) shows that the SLR7.4 and the SVSi Viper are within a plotter pen's width all the way to 150 mph, despite the SLR7.4's slight power-to-weight deficit and power-sapping automatic tranny.

Decelerating power comes from huge Alcon brakes. Six-piston calipers clamp 14.5-inch-diameter rotors in front, and four-piston calipers grasp stock 12.6-inch

rotors in back. They make a powerful *whoa!* Despite being the heaviest car in this test, the SLR7.4 stopped in the shortest distance—just 691 feet from 150 mph to 0, 29 feet better than the second-place Corvette. In daily driving, the brakes feel grabby at low speeds, but they're reassuring at highway velocities. In this superb car, they seem worth the \$10,000.

Ride comfort and drivability were high priorities, so when the stock adaptive-damping suspension was ditched in favor of custom springs, anti-roll bars, and Koni shocks, their settings were chosen carefully to preserve the poise of the donor SL. The result is a firm but never jarring ride, and the car changes direction much more quickly and crisply than does a stock SL600. For drivability, we gave the RENNTech the maximum five stars.

But the aesthetic delights, which account for most of the remaining \$115,000 worth of modifications, are what make the SLR so special. The top fabric is woven of dark green and beige threads to match the interior and exterior. The O-Z Magnesium wheels are finished in a coordinated beige color. The gauge cluster was reconfigured with the tach in the center and custom faces—beige, of course. Carbon fiber covers what used to be wood surfaces. Custom two-tone leather covers everything else, including a Passport radar detector.

It's ludicrously expensive, but it's so close to perfection that it almost seems a bargain.

—Frank Markus



Drivability: ★★★★★
Durability: ★★★★★

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

Price as tested: \$334,500 (base price*: \$219,500)

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

Displacement	.....	452 cu in, 7410cc
Power (SAE net)	.....	585 bhp @ 6000 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	.....	601 lb-ft @ 4000 rpm
Transmission	.....	4-speed automatic
Front brakes	.....	14.5 x 1.3-in vented, grooved Alcon disc; 6-piston RENNTech/Alcon caliper
Rear brakes	.....	12.6 x 1.0-in vented, grooved disc; 4-piston RENNTech/Alcon caliper
Brake pad material	.....	carbon-metallic
Power assist	.....	vacuum with anti-lock control
Wheelbase	.....	99.0 in
Length	.....	178.0 in
Curb weight	.....	4096 lb
Weight distribution, F/R	.....	54.0/46.0%

* Base price includes all performance-enhancing equipment.

RENNTech SLR7.4

