

CLASSIC DRIVER

Barn find Benz: this Mercedes SL 73 AMG was rescued after 17 years

Lead

This incredibly rare V12-powered Mercedes-Benz SL 73 AMG is one of just 85 cars ever made. After being parked for 17 years, it was fortunately rediscovered and recommissioned by the maestros at Mechatronik.



[Mechatronik](#) are no strangers to Mercedes-Benz's finest machinery, with their showroom and workshop welcoming everything from 300 SL to CLK GTRs, and even an impressive amount of unicorn-status rides that don't carry the three pointed star. In spite of their typical high-calibre offerings, the car in question today still manages to stand out, not just because of its incredible story of rediscovery after almost two decades spent in a parking lot, but because it is one of the greatest rides to emerge from AMG's formative early years.



This dust-drenched sleeping beauty is a 1999 Mercedes-Benz SL 73 AMG. Our Affalterbach aficionados will know that 1999 is the year that DaimlerChrysler AG officially became the majority stakeholder in AMG, transforming it into Mercedes-AMG GmbH, a name we are so familiar with today. That makes this R129 SL — which was delivered to AMG for the SL 73 conversion on July 28th, 1999 — one of the earliest post-merger cars in existence.



Throughout the 1990s, AMG had already been hard at work extracting as much performance as possible from the wedge-tastic R129. Starting with the 385 hp 500 SL 6.0 AMG in 1990, things only got more out of hand as AMG piled on the power. The SL 70 would follow in 1998, increasing potency to 496 hp, but things really got crazy when the utterly outrageous 526 hp SL 73 was finally unleashed.



Almost never advertised in any sales brochures or price lists, less than 85 SL 73s were ever made. Each started life as an already top-tier, AMG Styling Package-equipped SL 600, before being trucked to Affalterbach for the final transformation. The conversion cost a whopping 99,180 Deutschmarks, launching the final price above 350,000 Deutschmarks, making it one of the most expensive cars of its time. Of course, the crown jewel of the SL 73 was its artwork of an engine, a bored-out 7.3-litre variant of the V12 M120 series engine. The M120 series was used in the legendary CLK GTR in 6.9-litre form, and in 7.3-litre guise in the CLK GTR Super Sport, before finally appearing in the iconic Pagani Zonda S; some pretty wicked relatives for this mature grand tourer.



Completed and approved by the TÜV in Affalterbach on August 11, 1999, this SL 73 was then transferred into the care of its first German owner, Wolfgang Lanzendörfer, whose name is still inscribed on its doorsills and gear selector. Mr. Lanzendörfer commissioned one hell of a spec, pairing an Amber Red Metallic exterior — the only SL 73 to be painted in this hue — with a two-tone Designo black and red leather interior peppered with red carbon fibre.



After being serviced in May 2001 and again in June 2003, this SL 73 was bought by its second owner at auction in 2005. Over the course of a year, this individual only used this SL 73 occasionally with the red dealer license plate still attached, before parking it for good. That means today, over than 24 years after this car was built, it still shows only one owner entry in the original German vehicle registration document. More than 17 years after it was parked, Mechatronik were contacted by the owner who was looking to possibly recommission the car, but after learning of its history and significance, Mechatronik decided to purchase this AMG for their own collection.



After a comprehensive session in the wash bay, removing almost two decades of dust, it was discovered that the car still retained its original paintwork. The specialists at Mechatronik then began the process of returning this gorgeous SL 73 to its former glory. Among other things, they examined the engine with an endoscope, before cleaning the ignition coils and injectors and replacing the spark plugs.



The fuel system was checked, the fuel pumps and filters were replaced, while all the fluids were flushed out and replaced to ensure its gargantuan V12 was in good health. The last few steps were to inspect and clean the chassis' hydraulics system, before the wheels were reshod in Michelin Pilot Sport 5s. As the cherry on top, this SL 73 was treated to extensive paint and interior detailing, practically bringing the car back to its delivery condition in 1999, aside from some minor signs of wear.



Thanks to Mechatronik's extensive work, this SL 73 has to rank among the finest remaining examples of this rare beast. The car retains its original Panorama hardtop and complete documents, including the SL 73 operating instructions, and service booklet. Interestingly, this SL 73 bears very few visual distinctions from its lesser R129-based siblings, with only the badge and twin-exit exhausts hinting at the 7.3-litre monster hiding under the bonnet. As far as sleepers go, it doesn't get much cooler than this Amber Red marvel. While this SL 73 is currently not for sale, if you want a rare Mercedes to call your own, or if you already are the owner of an interesting and significant AMG that you wish to part with, don't hesitate to get in contact with Mechatronik!

Photos by Kevin Bitz

Gallery

