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Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren Roadster



Mercedes-Benz has launched a drop-top version of its superlative SLR McLaren supercar. Having admired the supremely elegant looks of this devastatingly quick roadster, the first question in a potential buyer's mind is likely to be whether the car's rigidity has been compromised by the removal of the roof.

According to Mercedes, however, the complex carbonfibre technology of the original coupé version, in which the body is made almost entirely of carbonfibre reinforced plastic (CFRP), has been further developed to give the SLR McLaren Roadster a similar torsional stiffness to its coupé sibling. If the claims are correct, the new Roadster should have outstanding ride characteristics, of the sort usually found only in closed-top supercars. And that's quite an achievement.



The new high-performance convertible is powered by the same AMG V8 compressor as the coupé, delivering 617bhp, and uses the same AMG Speedshift R five-speed automatic transmission to accelerate the Roadster from zero to 62 mph in 3.8 seconds. The maximum speed is unchanged, at 207mph. So it seems there is no compromise in performance or ride, it simply offers the pleasures of a fully retractable top, to give undiluted open-air driving pleasure. Mercedes tells us that conversation is still possible at well over 200km/h (124 mph) with the roof down, thanks to the favourable aeroacoustics.

The retractable top itself is said to “blend harmoniously into the flowing lines of the SLR McLaren”, although the initial announcement carried no photographs of the car with the roof up... so it remains to be seen. The roof material, itself “newly developed”, is available in three different colours, and the roof opens and closes semi-automatically in less than 10 seconds. To open, the roof needs to be unlocked from the windscreen frame and briefly raised, after which it folds away electrically.



A high degree of safety is ensured by unique carbonfibre crash elements, steel-reinforced A-pillars and two fixed rollover bars. The specification also features adaptive airbags, knee and side airbags as well as seatbelt tensioners and a tyre-pressure monitoring system. Standard equipment includes semi-aniline-leather-upholstered carbonfibre bucket seats, which can be individually adapted to the driver and front passenger by means of differently sized seat pads; dual-zone automatic air-conditioning; a high-quality BOSE premium sound system; a multifunction sport steering wheel with gearchange paddles, and a navigation system with integral radio and CD player.



The new Mercedes-Benz SLR Roadster, like the coupé, is produced at McLaren's Formula 1 factory in Woking, England, and will be available from September 2007.

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