

SPORTS CAR INTERNATIONAL



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Track Tested: Ferrari 250 LM Berlinetta

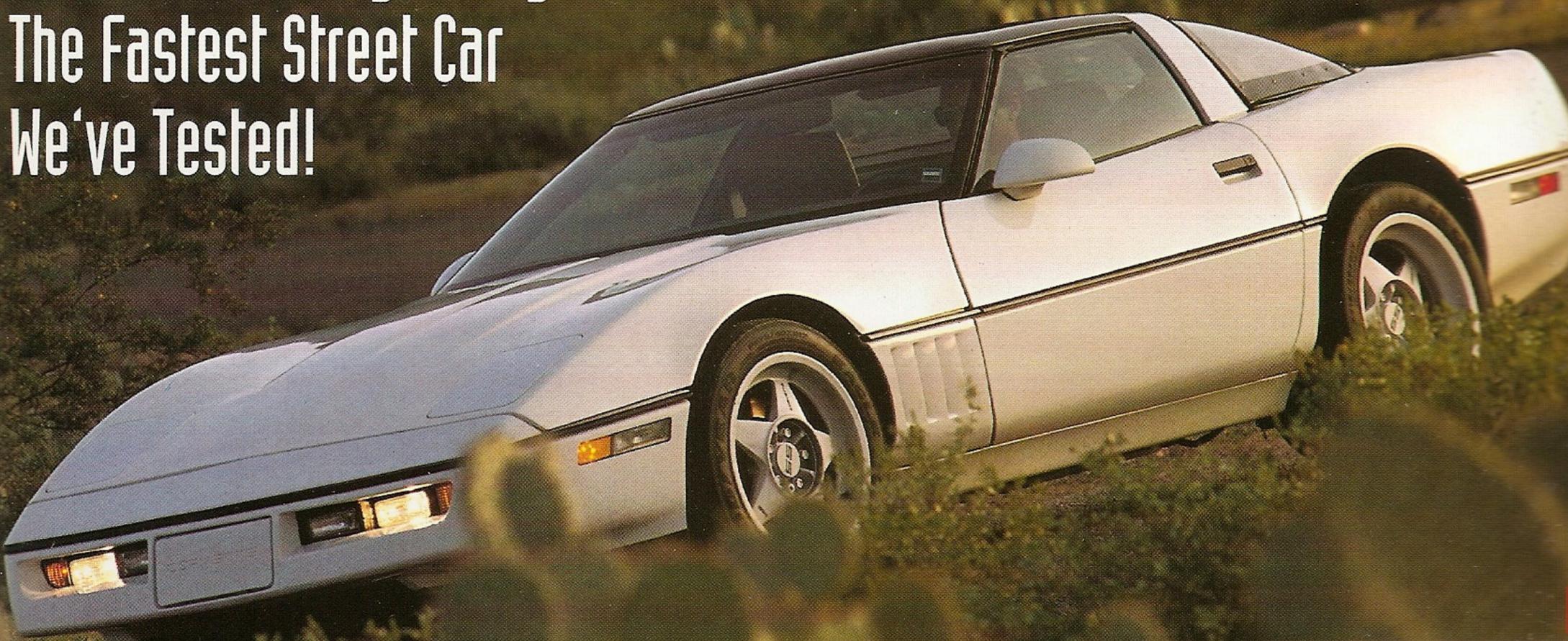
HKS MR2 and 1993 MR2 Turbo: Ferrari Performance for the Masses!

Plus:

- Mercedes 500E
- Lexus SC300
- Cooper-Climax T53
- Connaught L2
- Honda Civic Si
- Suzuki GSX-R
- John Fitch
- Max Mosley



Corvette ZR-1 Lightweight: The Fastest Street Car We've Tested!



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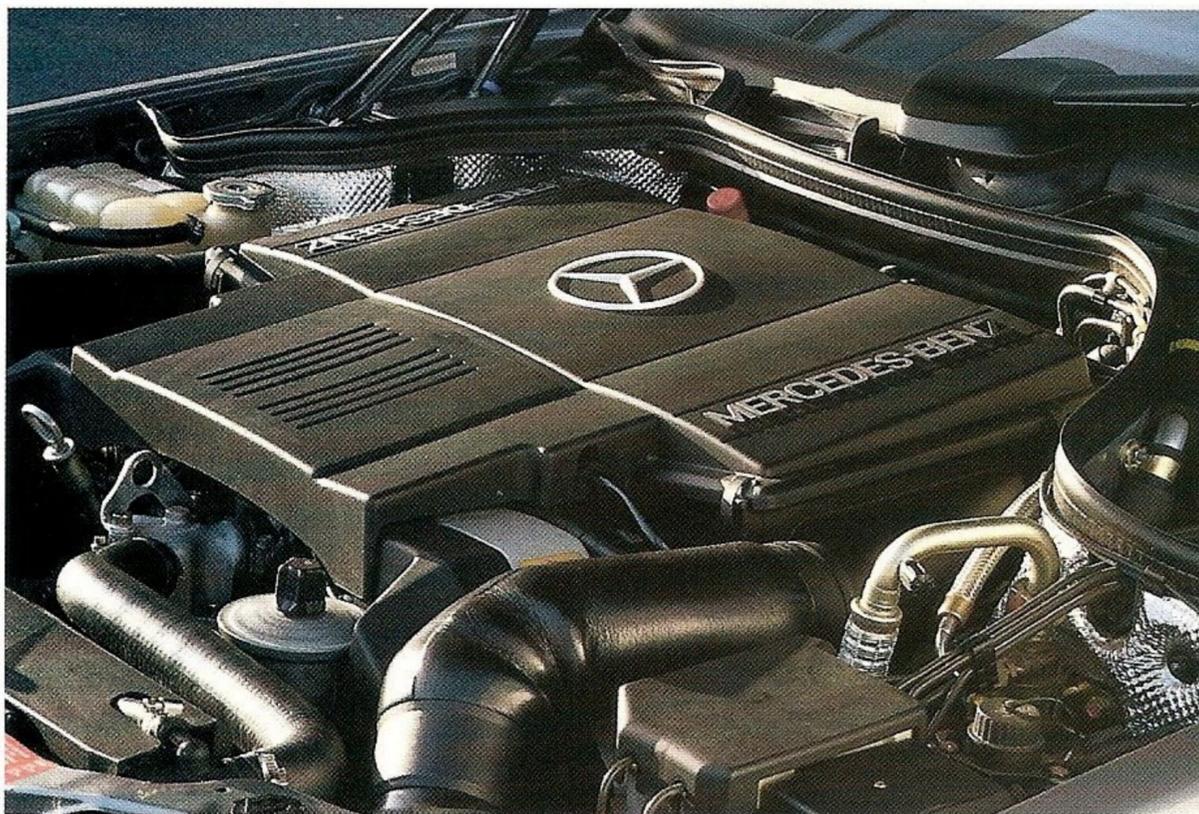
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TRACK TEST

Mercedes is the standard by which luxury sedans are judged the world over. Powerful engines are often a part of the picture, but after the radical, high-performance 300SL of the 1950s and early 1960s, and Mercedes' withdrawal from racing in 1955, those big Mercedes motors have always been installed to provide greater comfort and move heavy cars with effortless ease rather than to rub elbows with muscle-bound sports cars. ¶ So what do you do if the competitors' high-dollar sports sedans start to compete in luxury as well as perfor-



mance? Specifically, if you're Mercedes-Benz, how do you counter the BMW M5, and for that matter all the European Mercedes "tuners"?

Easy. You do some tweaking on your engine. You do some work on the body and chassis—lots of work on the body and chassis. And because this isn't a high-volume item, you might get somebody else to do the assembly work for you. The result, in this case, is the Mercedes-Benz 500E.

Mercedes started with the basic V8 engine found in the 500SL and huge new 500SEL. To bring the power up, they replaced the Bosch KE-Jetronic

MERCEDES-BENZ 500E
by
PETER ALBRECHT
photography by
RICK GRAVES

fuel injection with a more advanced LH-Jetronic unit, which uses the latest in metering: a hot-wire air flow sensor instead of a mechanical flapper. The engine retains the rpm-dependent variable intake cam timing used on the 500SL. Maximum power is unchanged, but torque goes up by 22 lbs. ft., thanks in part to a redesigned intake manifold. And torque is what makes acceleration.

Mercedes then attached the outstanding four-speed automatic used

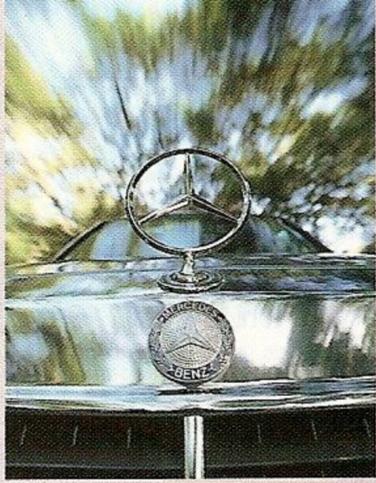
on the SL, and gave it a shorter final drive so that the engine will reach redline in top gear. They shoehorned both into an extensively modified W124 (300E/400E) body. The result is an engine with more torque, hauling a car with nearly 300 lbs. less curb weight than the 500SL convertible.

You can't help but notice the massively flared fenders that accommodate the wide tires; they look like they'll easily swallow even wider rubber than the stock 225/55Z-rated Michelins on 16-inch rims. And in the best tuner tradition, Mercedes has fitted an air dam and driving lights,

and lowered the body.

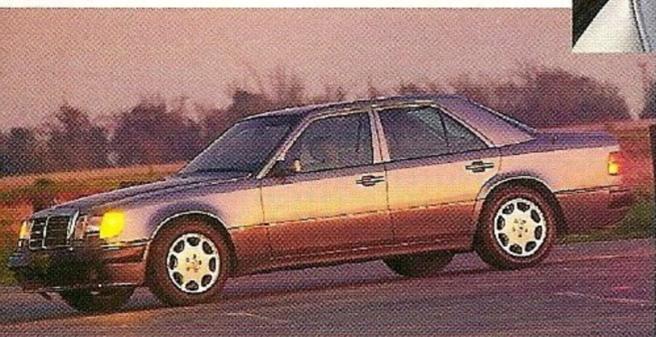
Mercedes has stiffened the suspension to handle the added performance. And they let somebody who specializes in small (by Mercedes standards) production runs — Porsche, in this case — put all the pieces together. The 500E bodies are welded by Porsche at Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen, trucked to the Mercedes plant in Sindelfingen for paint, trucked back across town to Porsche for assembly, then brought back to Sindelfingen for final quality control. The 500E will remain a rare car; the Porsche assembly plant in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen makes 20 Mercedes 500Es per day, of which about 600 per year will reach the U.S. market.

The 500E is equipped with traction control. And as on the other Mercedes with this feature, you can't turn it off. There is a "snow tire" switch, but that only changes the system's low-speed response. We found that it is possible to fool the system, but only rarely and not consistently. On one occasion we hit a puddle of water while cornering hard, and did so another time while accelerating away from a standing start. Once back on dry pavement, the rear tires broke loose in a cloud of smoke — graphically demonstrating why Mercedes installs the system to begin with. But this was the exception, not the norm. On the drag strip, the system eliminates wheelspin. It doesn't matter what you do to launch the car; floor the throttle and sidestep the brake, or just plain mash the gas pedal, snow tire switch on or off, the results are the



same. The 500E calmly, quietly gathers momentum at a great rate. No fuss whatsoever, little tire squeal, and no driver involvement required.

As expected of Mercedes, the build quality is flawless. The doors close like the proverbial bank vault; there isn't a flimsy panel or knob or cover on the car. Think of



a jet-propelled safe and you have the basic idea behind the 500E.

On the road, the 500E exhibits far less of the usual Mercedes lean in corners. Although outwardly not as performance-oriented as the BMW M5, by comparison to Mercedes sedans of the past it's downright sporty. The stiffer springs and shocks do their job, yet road isolation is excellent. Nor is there much wind or tire noise, even on rough roads. Mercedes seats have gotten much more supportive in recent times; the fully electrically adjustable 500E seats keep you from ending up on the center console during hard cornering.

Like the 500SL, the 500E achieves its performance effortlessly. It's useful to think of the 500E as a counterpoint for the BMW M5 — perhaps an M5 luxury edition. Both weigh about the same. Both put out about the same power. The Mercedes has lots more torque, which is needed with its automatic trans-

mission. And both turn in almost identical performance numbers. But you can drive the Mercedes hard and not even work up a sweat. That's the difference between it and the M5. With the M5, you are much more involved in steering, shifting, and throttle control; the car is your partner. In the case of the Mercedes, the car is your servant.

We recorded a 0 to 60 time of 5.85 seconds, phenomenal for this class of car. The BMW M5 is quicker, at 5.77; that's not enough difference to matter. We saw the quarter mile in 14.39 seconds at 98.5 mph; the BMW M5 was only slightly quicker, posting 14.34 at 99.4 mph. These numbers are comparable to several sports cars, including the Porsche 928 GT. Under full throttle, the 500E shifts at redline, without any driveline jolt, thanks to the electronic interface between the transmission and engine controls. The best of the modern automatics seem to be uniformly good in this regard; we've re-

cently driven Mercedes, BMW, and GM cars with this sort of flawless shifting. The only way to improve on the new automatics is to go the next step to Porsche's Tiptronic system.

In top speed, the Mercedes averaged 156 mph, again almost an exact match for the BMW. The tach needle marched right up to redline and 157 mph on one run.

The car is supposedly speed-governed to 155 mph, but in our past experience with BMW and Mercedes, a car will go a little past the published speed. We were able to reach redline in top gear without detecting the effect of a speed governor.

In braking, the Mercedes stopped from 60 mph in 127 feet, from 80 mph in 227 feet — both just two feet longer than the M5.

The 500E offers high-speed, high-luxury space for four, and a bit more performance than the convertible SL. The M5 is available only with a manual transmission; the Mercedes only with an automatic. The Mercedes is nearly \$20,000 more expensive than the M5, but \$18,300 less than the 500SL. Both the 500E and M5 do the same job. The BMW calls for more driver involvement, and emphasizes the "sport" in luxury sports sedan. The Mercedes is the high-performance choice for somebody who perhaps hasn't come up through sports cars, but now discovers that he wants performance, and needs the room and solidity of a sedan; the Mercedes emphasis is on the "luxury" in luxury sports sedan. ■

DATA

VEHICLE TYPE: FRONT ENGINE, REAR-WHEEL DRIVE, FOUR-DOOR, FOUR-PASSENGER SPORTS SEDAN
BODY/CHASSIS: STEEL UNIT BODY

PRICES

BASE PRICE: \$72,900 (DEALER INVOICE, \$63,360)
OPTIONS: COMPACT DISC CHANGER, \$1,200; SUNROOF, NO CHARGE.

ENGINE

CONFIGURATION: LONGITUDINAL V8, ALLOY BLOCK AND HEADS
BORE X STROKE: 96.5 X 85.0 MM
DISPLACEMENT: 4,973CC

COMPRESSION: 10.0
POWER OUTPUT: 322 BHP @ 5,700 RPM
TORQUE: 354 LBS. FT. @ 3,900 RPM
REDLINE: 6,000
FUEL DELIVERY: BOSCH LH JETRONIC FUEL INJECTION
FUEL REQUIREMENT: PREMIUM UNLEADED
VALVE TRAIN: CHAIN-DRIVEN DOUBLE OVERHEAD CAMS, RPM-DEPENDENT ELECTRO-HYDRAULIC VARIABLE VALVE TIMING OF INTAKE CAM, HYDRAULIC BUCKET TAPPETS, FOUR VALVES PER CYLINDER

TRANSMISSION

GEAR	RATIO	SPEED
1ST:	3.87	41 MPH
2ND:	2.25	70
3RD:	1.44	109
4TH:	1.00	156 @ 6,000 RPM

FINAL DRIVE: 2.82

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

CURB WEIGHT: 3,855 LBS.
WHEELBASE: 110.2 IN.
TRACK, F/R: 60.6/60.2 IN.
LENGTH: 187.2 IN.
WIDTH: 70.7 IN.
HEIGHT: 55.4 IN.
INTERIOR DIMENSIONS, HEAD/LEG/HIP, F/R: 37.5/41.5/53.0 IN.; 36.9/33.5/55.4 IN.
LUGGAGE CAPACITY: 13.8 CU. FT.
FUEL CAPACITY: 23.8 GAL.
EPA FUEL ECONOMY, CITY/HWY: 14/17 MPG

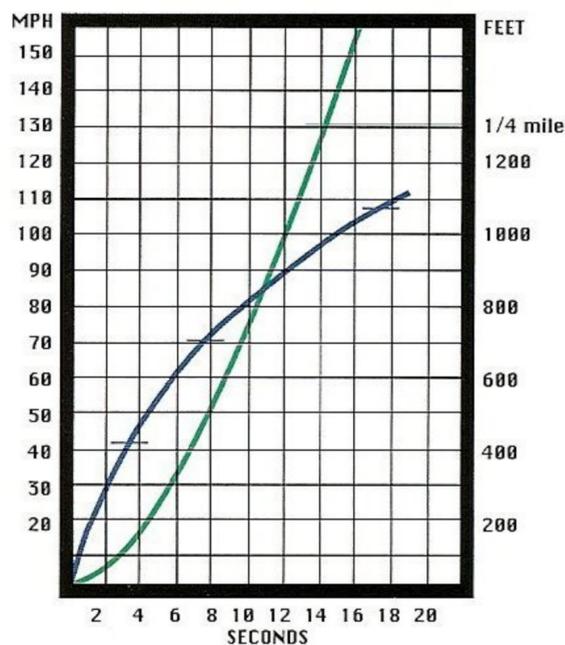
STEERING, SUSPENSION, BRAKES

STEERING TYPE: RECIRCULATING BALL, POWER ASSISTED
TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK: 3.1
TURNING CIRCLE: 38.4 FT.
FRONT SUSPENSION: STRUTS WITH GAS-FILLED, SPRING-LOADED SHOCK OFFSET FROM COIL SPRINGS, LOWER CONTROL ARMS, ANTI-ROLL BAR
REAR SUSPENSION: FIVE-LINK SUSPENSION, COIL SPRINGS, SPRING-LOADED GAS PRESSURE SHOCKS, ANTI-ROLL BAR
WHEELS: 8 X 16, ALLOY
TIRES: 225/55ZR-16
BRAKES, F/R: VENTED DISCS, POWER ASSISTED, ABS STANDARD.

PERFORMANCE

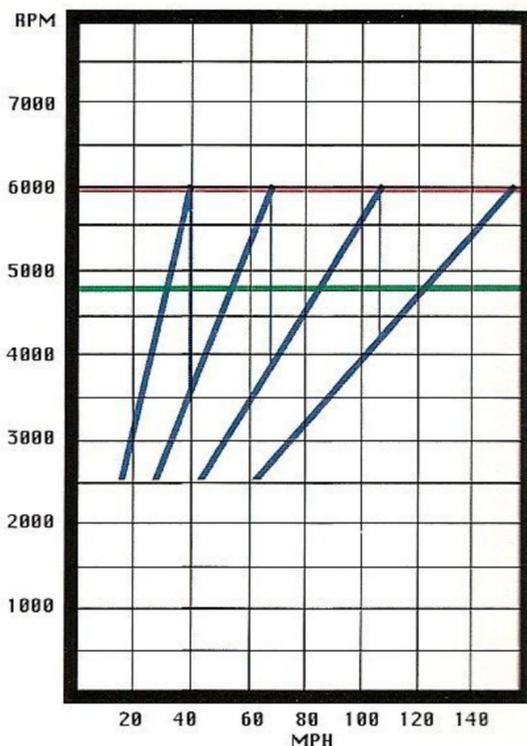
0-60 MPH: 5.85 SEC.
0-100 MPH: 14.84 SEC.
1/4 MILE: 14.39 SEC. @ 98.5 MPH
TOP SPEED: 156 @ 6,000 RPM
BRAKING FROM 60: 127 FT.
BRAKING FROM 80: 227 FT.

ENGINE ELASTICITY (TIME, SECONDS)
GEAR 30-50 50-70
DRIVE 2.2 3.1



TIME TO SPEED
TIME TO DISTANCE

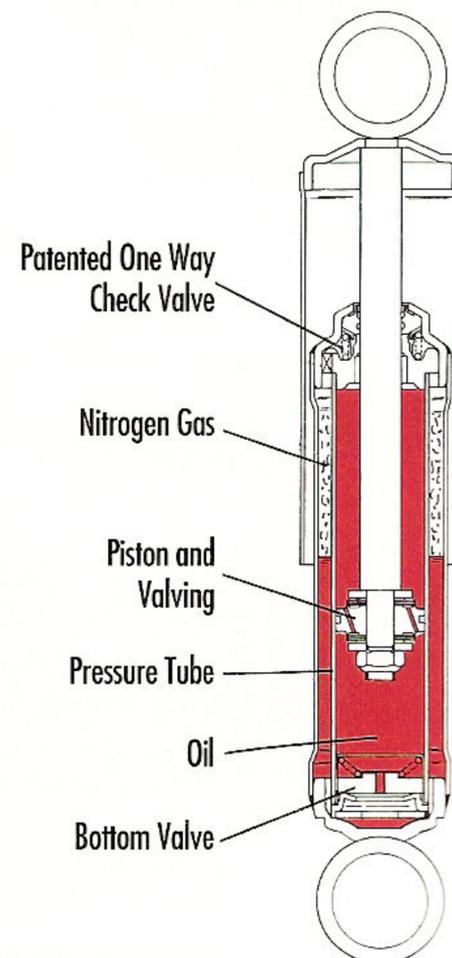
MAXIMUM POWER MAXIMUM TORQUE GEARS, 1-4



CAR	ISSUE	0-60	1/4 MILE @ MPH	TOP SPEED	BRAKING 80-0 FT.	LATERAL ACC.(G)	HP/RPM	TORQUE/RPM	PRICE (\$)
Acura NSX	12/90	5.03	13.47 @ 105.6	163	218	0.94	270 @ 7100	210 @ 5300	60,000
Acura Vigor GS	10/91	8.21	16.28 @ 86.8	129	239	0.79	176 @ 6300	170 @ 3900	25,250
Alfa Romeo 164 L	6/90	7.57	15.95 @ 89.9	N/A	234	0.80	183 @ 5800	189 @ 4400	27,500
Audi 100CS	4/92	9.69	17.28 @ 81.4	130	223	N/A	172 @ 5500	184 @ 3000	32,900
Audi 200 Quattro	6/91	6.13	14.78 @ 90.6	148	228	N/A	217 @ 5700	228 @ 1950	43,500
Audi V8	11/89	9.13	16.95 @ 87.7	141	237	0.77	240 @ 5800	245 @ 4000	47,450
Audi Coupe Quattro	5/90	8.72	16.62 @ 84.0	132	229	0.82	162 @ 6000	157 @ 4500	29,750
BMW 318is	10/90	8.18	16.27 @ 85.5	121	213	0.85	134 @ 6000	127 @ 4600	21,500
BMW 325i	11/91	7.39	15.72 @ 89.6	129	233	0.82	189 @ 5900	181 @ 4700	27,990
BMW 525i	8/91	7.95	16.12 @ 87.6	129	247	0.81	189 @ 5900	181 @ 4700	34,500
BMW M3	1/90	7.38	15.65 @ 90.8	139	244	0.81	192 @ 6750	170 @ 4750	34,950
BMW M5	9/90	5.77	14.34 @ 99.4	157	225	0.85	310 @ 6900	265 @ 4750	56,600
Cadillac Seville STS	4/92	8.58	16.59 @ 81.1	120	232	N/A	200 @ 4100	275 @ 3000	37,975
Chevrolet Corvette ZR-1	4/90	4.80	13.28 @ 109.8	170	205	0.89	375 @ 5800	370 @ 4800	58,995
Chevrolet Corvette LT-1	1/92	5.25	13.83 @ 102.6	160	213	0.90	300 @ 5000	330 @ 4000	33,635
Calaway Corvette	4/90	4.79	13.11 @ 112.0	172	212	0.90	390 @ 4250	562 @ 2500	58,540
Ferrari Testarossa	12/89	5.50	13.84 @ 103.3	166	237	0.92	380 @ 5750	354 @ 4500	144,500
Ford Mustang LX	3/90	6.05	14.62 @ 96.7	136	277	0.83	225 @ 4200	300 @ 3200	13,007
Ford Probe GT	10/89	7.27	15.74 @ 90.0	130	241	0.83	145 @ 4300	190 @ 3500	14,367
Ford Taurus SHO	11/89	7.44	15.89 @ 91.8	133	276	0.82	220 @ 6200	200 @ 4800	20,189
Ford Thunderbird SC	4/90	6.63	15.07 @ 92.9	131	249	0.84	210 @ 4000	315 @ 2600	20,390
Ford Thunderbird V8	8/91	8.04	16.22 @ 88.0	111	251	0.76	200 @ 4000	275 @ 3000	20,256
Honda Prelude Si	3/92	7.66	15.85 @ 89.1	129	238	0.87	160 @ 5800	156 @ 4500	19,250
Infiniti Q45 Full Active	11/91	7.41	15.65 @ 92.5	147	232	0.80	278 @ 6000	292 @ 4000	40,000
Jaguar XJ6	1/91	9.34	17.19 @ 85.5	133	233	0.78	223 @ 4750	278 @ 3650	39,900
Lamborghini LM002	11/89	9.74	17.31 @ 79.8	120	292	0.72	455 @ 7000	368 @ 5000	126,000
Lexus ES300	3/92	9.18	16.98 @ 83.6	131	226	0.78	185 @ 5200	195 @ 4400	25,250
Lexus LS400	10/89	8.72	16.64 @ 87.7	146	242	0.75	250 @ 5600	260 @ 4400	35,000
Lexus SC300	5/92	7.14	15.53 @ 88.7	140	224	N/A	225 @ 6000	210 @ 4800	31,100
Lotus Turbo Esprit SE	12/89	5.08	13.80 @ 100.8	159	231	0.84	264 @ 6500	261 @ 3900	79,500
Mitsubishi Diamante LS	10/91	9.85	17.40 @ 83.4	125	258	0.76	202 @ 6000	199 @ 3000	25,135
Mitsubishi Galant VR4	11/90	6.49	14.93 @ 90.1	132	224	0.80	195 @ 6000	203 @ 3000	21,000
M-B 300 SL 3.0-24	4/90	8.19	16.28 @ 88.5	145	234	0.84	228 @ 6300	201 @ 4600	72,500
M-B 300SL (1957)	2/90	8.06	16.43 @ 87.1	127	N/A	N/A	240 @ 6100	217 @ 4800	10,970
M-B 400E	2/92	7.47	15.68 @ 94.2	147	237	0.75	268 @ 5700	295 @ 3900	55,800
M-B 500E	5/92	5.85	14.39 @ 98.5	156	227	N/A	322 @ 5700	354 @ 3900	72,900
M-B 500SL	6/91	6.31	14.66 @ 99.9	158	221	0.82	322 @ 5500	332 @ 4000	89,300
Nissan 300 ZX	10/89	7.30	15.73 @ 90.2	134	214	0.87	222 @ 6400	198 @ 4800	27,560
Nissan 300 ZX Turbo	3/90	5.35	13.90 @ 105.3	157	243	0.90	300 @ 6400	283 @ 3600	33,000
Nissan Maxima SE	12/91	7.44	15.79 @ 88.6	140	222	0.80	190 @ 5600	190 @ 4000	N/A
Pontiac Firebird GTA/SLP	3/91	6.39	14.93 @ 95.2	144	233	N/A	290 @ 4,400	350 @ 3,200	24,530
Pontiac Grand Prix GTP	9/91	7.15	15.51 @ 90.8	123	N/A	0.85	210 @ 5200	215 @ 4000	19,154
Porsche 911 Carrera 2	2/90	5.13	13.74 @ 103.6	159	N/A	N/A	247 @ 6100	228 @ 4800	58,500
Porsche 911 Carrera 4	12/89	4.93	13.52 @ 101.9	157	224	N/A	247 @ 6100	228 @ 4800	70,065
Porsche 928GT	8/90	5.63	14.17 @ 101.9	163	210	0.85	326 @ 6200	317 @ 4100	74,545
Porsche 944 S2	12/89	6.37	14.94 @ 94.2	146	224	0.86	208 @ 5800	207 @ 4100	41,900
Saab 9000 Turbo	5/91	6.72	15.32 @ 93.3	142	229	0.80	200 @ 5000	244 @ 2000	32,995
Saab 9000 CD	9/89	7.94	16.32 @ 89.9	132	245	0.78	160 @ 5500	188 @ 3000	32,354
Subaru SVX	1/92	8.26	16.28 @ 86.2	134	224	0.83	230 @ 5400	224 @ 4400	25,000
Toyota Celica All-Trac	5/90	7.59	15.78 @ 87.7	130	245	0.83	200 @ 6000	200 @ 3200	21,008
Toyota MR2 Turbo	6/90	6.23	14.65 @ 93.3	141	218	N/A	200 @ 6000	200 @ 3200	18,228
Toyota Supra	2/90	6.73	15.25 @ 93.9	146	277	0.85	232 @ 5600	254 @ 3200	27,080
Volkswagen Corrado	1/90	9.08	16.79 @ 84.6	132	232	N/A	158 @ 5600	166 @ 4000	17,900
Volkswagen GTI	7/90	10.44	17.71 @ 77.4	N/A	268	N/A	100 @ 5400	107 @ 3400	9,950



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