

CLASSIC DRIVER

Spectators beware - three of Mechatronik's monsters are stalking the Nurburgring this weekend

Lead
To celebrate their 25th Anniversary, Mechatronik are heading to this weekend's Nurburgring 24 Hours with three of their maddest Mercedes.



Should you be driving on the autobahn en route to this weekend's Nurburgring 24 hours and you hear the sound of thunder coming from behind, followed by the sight of three of the wildest modified Mercedes-Benz cars ever to burn rubber, fear not.
You won't be hallucinating due to lack of sleep - you'll have just been loudly jumped by the anniversary road trippers from [Mechatronik](#).



This year marks a quarter of a century since the founding of the now-celebrated Mercedes-Benz specialist set-up by talented engineer Frank Rickert, whose boyhood love of all things mechanical (at 15 he built-up a Kreidler motorcycle from parts found discarded in plastic bags) earned him an apprenticeship with AMG.

Rickert was still studying for his engineering diploma when he launched Mechatronik in 1997 as a three-man workshop in Grossbotwar, Baden-Wurttemberg, and proceeded to grow it into a world leader in the sale and restoration of classic Mercedes-Benz models.

Now based in Pleidelsheim north of Stuttgart, the firm employs more than 40 people in a state-of-the-art, 6,000 square metre workshop with individual areas for engine building, body renovation, interior trimming, and electrical work.



Mechatronik has become especially well-known for its spectacular New-Tech restomods based on the W113 (which becomes the M-SL) and the big W111s (the M-Coupe and M-Cabrio), which they have produced for more than 20 years.

After stripping the originals down to their bare bones, Mechatronik builds them back up again with mighty, modern AMG engines boasting outputs of up to 360 horsepower, superbly appointed interiors, upgraded brakes and suspension, and modern-day safety devices.

Add a vast range of paint and trim options and the result is a car that outwardly looks just as it did (or rather better than) when it rolled off the Mercedes-Benz production line, but goes, stops and drives as well as anything from the 21st century.



While Mechatronik has focused heavily on creating cars for effortless and comfortable daily driving, it is now set to unleash its first truly high performance model in the form of 'Project 107', an R107-SLC based, road-legal track car.

Regular Classic Driver readers will remember that we learned about the project in a visit to Mechatronik HQ at the end of last year – since then it has come on leaps and bounds and is set for completion before the autumn.

And it's to promote this new, high-performance side of the business, the firm's head of sales, Pascal Stephan, came up with the idea of holding the earth-shaking trip to the Nurburgring this weekend.



"Project 107 has proved to be the most demanding car we have developed in the history of the company, and the fact that we have spent a great deal of time testing at the Nurburgring Nordschleife inspired us to show our commitment to historic motorsport by taking three very special high performance cars to the circuit at the time of the 24 hour race," he told Classic Driver before setting-off on the 230 km blast. And when Stephan says 'very special' he really means it.

The first and perhaps most spectacular car is the actual AMG 450SLC 'Mampe' racer that inspired the creation of Project 107. Now owned by Mechatronik, the Mampe is based on a 1978 450SLC powered by AMG's 4.5 litre race engine that develops 375 horsepower at a heady 6,550 rpm.



It was first driven for AMG by Hans Heyer and Clemens Schickentanz in 1978's European Touring Car Championship (it was eligible due to its 'two-plus-two'seating), under sponsorship from German liqueur manufacturer Mampe that was then in the throes of promoting the 'Lufthansa Cocktail' that the national airline served on all its flights.

Despite its mighty output and outrageously muscular appearance, the Mampe scored just a single victory for AMG during the three years in which it competed. And appropriately enough - considering this weekend's road trip - the win was at the 1980 Nurburging Six Hours, under the pairing of Schickentanz and new race partner, Jorg Denzel.



The second car in the convoy is a Mercedes 190E 'EVO II', a fabulous example of the now hugely sought-after be-spoilered and be-winged super saloon, powered by a high-revving 2.5-litre, 16-valve Cosworth engine tuned to produce 235 bhp.

One of the 500 'blue black' cars produced (there were two more in Astral silver) it is a true DTM racer for the road, complete with limited slip diff, Getrag dogleg gearbox, huge brakes, stiff suspension and a considerably wider track than the standard 190E.



The third and final Mechatronik Nurburgring road trip car, meanwhile, is undoubtedly the most famous: it's the well-known and unique replica of the AMG Rote Sau or 'Red Pig' – the unlikely race car that kick-started the tuning company's success.

Built from a 1969 300 SEL 6.3 into a carbon copy of the first Red Pig (that ended up being used in aircraft testing and destroyed), the replica has, ironically, become almost more famous than the original. That's because it is the actual vehicle that was scanned-in and had its engine note recorded to create the car featured in the video game Gran Turismo 7, as was their 190E 'EVO II'.



And guests of the Mechatronik team at this weekend's Nurburgring 24 will be able to experience what the Red Pig is like to drive in anger - from the safety of a GT7 simulator.

The Red Pig and the other two cars will also complete some full-bore laps of the circuit before the race gets underway. It promises to be a wild weekend – and to find out how it went, check back here in a few days....

Photos by Keno Zache

Gallery

