

Small, light, AMG-powered. by Joe Sage

A number of small, relatively affordable German roadsters reached our shores roughly two decades ago: the Audi TT, BMW Z3, Porsche Boxster and Mercedes-Benz SLK (now renamed SLC). They were all about simple top-down fun and style, with horsepower originally kept consciously short of their higher-performance stablemates. Enter the 2018 Mercedes-AMG SLC43, and you can readily see that the speed limits have been lifted.

The number portion of an AMG model's alphanumeric was once directly related to its displacement, but now uses standardized numbers to indicate relative position. A range of AMG 43 models have a 3.0-liter biturbo V6. (Three 43 models were renamed 53 earlier this year, as they changed over to an inline-six, so keep an eye on the next SLC).

The 2018 Mercedes-AMG SLC43 Roadster we're driving here has 50 percent more horsepower than a non-AMG Mercedes-Benz SLC 300, at just 27 percent higher cost. This seems a clear winning proposition, and you can stop right there. Other AMG bits beyond the engine and enhanced transmission in our visually grabbing sample turn out to be op-

tions, about \$15,000 worth (see sidebar).

Many of the AMG upgrades are cosmetic (although spoilers front and rear combine function and style). Red style cues are a big part of this, and plenty of 'em, from front and rear lips, to red brake calipers, red-flanged wheels and a few other little touches (enough to start to tip the scales beyond subtle and a bit toward Batmobile).

Mercedes has always had a retractable hardtop on the SLC, as on the bigger SL. The hardtop adds weight, but horsepower in the upper threes makes for a plenty quick and highly precise luxo-rocket. Top operation is one-button simple and fast, as long as you first make sure the trunk is clear.

An AMG version always indicates a significantly more performance-oriented build, and while the earlier Euro roadsters were kept a bit shy of their bigger siblings' specs, as sales of smaller cars have become hotter, power and fitment have both grown (as has their size itself). If not seen side by side, you could easily take your Mercedes-AMG SLC43 experience for the bigger SL (to a point), but at just 30 to 40 percent the price. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	AMG-enhanced 3.0L alum alloy biturbo V6
HP/TORQUE	362 hp / 384 lb-ft
TRANS / DRIVETRAIN	9G-Tronic 9-spd auto / RWD
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	4.6 sec / 155 mph (elec lim)
SUSPENSION ...F:	indep spring strut & wishbone w coils, double-tube shocks, tubular stblzr; R: indep multi-link w coils, single-tube shocks, tubular torsion bar
STEERING	speed-dep electro-hydr rack-and-pinion
BRAKES	F: 14.2 / R: 13.0
WHEELS/TIRES ...F:	8x18 235/40R18 / R: 9x18 255/35R18
LENGTH/WHEELBASE	163.1 / 95.7 in
TURNING CIRCLE / GROUND CLEARANCE	34.5 ft / 4.1 in
CARGO VOLUME	(top up/down) 10.1 / 6.4 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3541 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	18.5 gal
MPG	20/29/23 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$61,350
BLACK ROOF W HEADLINER	250
PREMIUM 3 PKG: Comand w nav, 3 yrs maps, DVD, voice control, active LED heads, adaptive high beams, dual zone climate, analog clock, Apple/Android, multicolor ambient lighting, Distronic, lane keep assist, Parktronic	6650
AMG HANDLING PKG: AMG Ride Control, sport suspension, limited slip diff, red calipers, AMG Nappa/Dinamica performance steering wheel, IWC design analog clock	3700
AMG PERFORMANCE STUDIO REDART: Red front splitter, flics, fins on fenders, rear diffuser insert; 18" AMG black 10-spoke wheels w red rim flange; red brake calipers; leather sport steering wheel w carbon fiber effect; AMG shift lever w crest; AMG floor mats w red edging	3500
DESTINATION CHARGE	995
TOTAL	\$76,445

