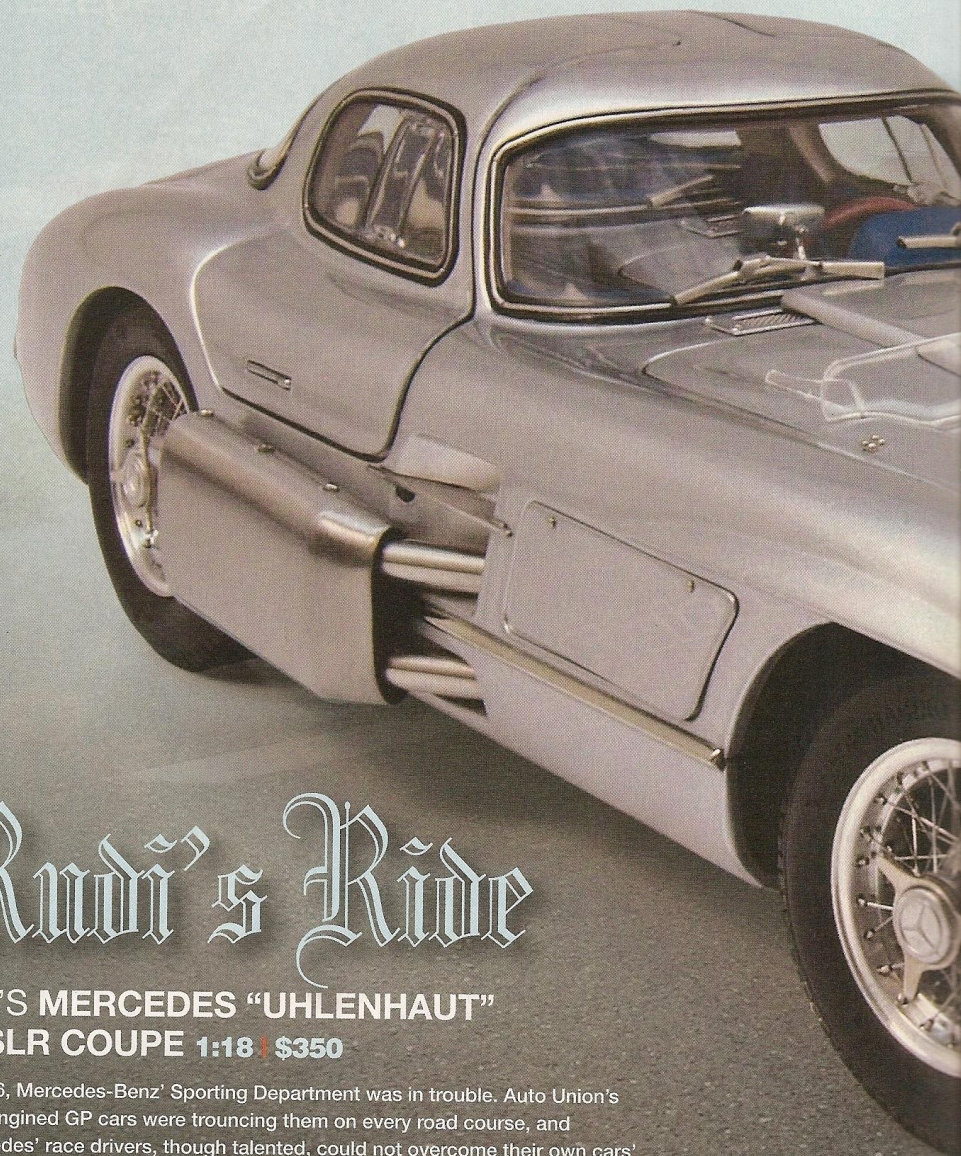


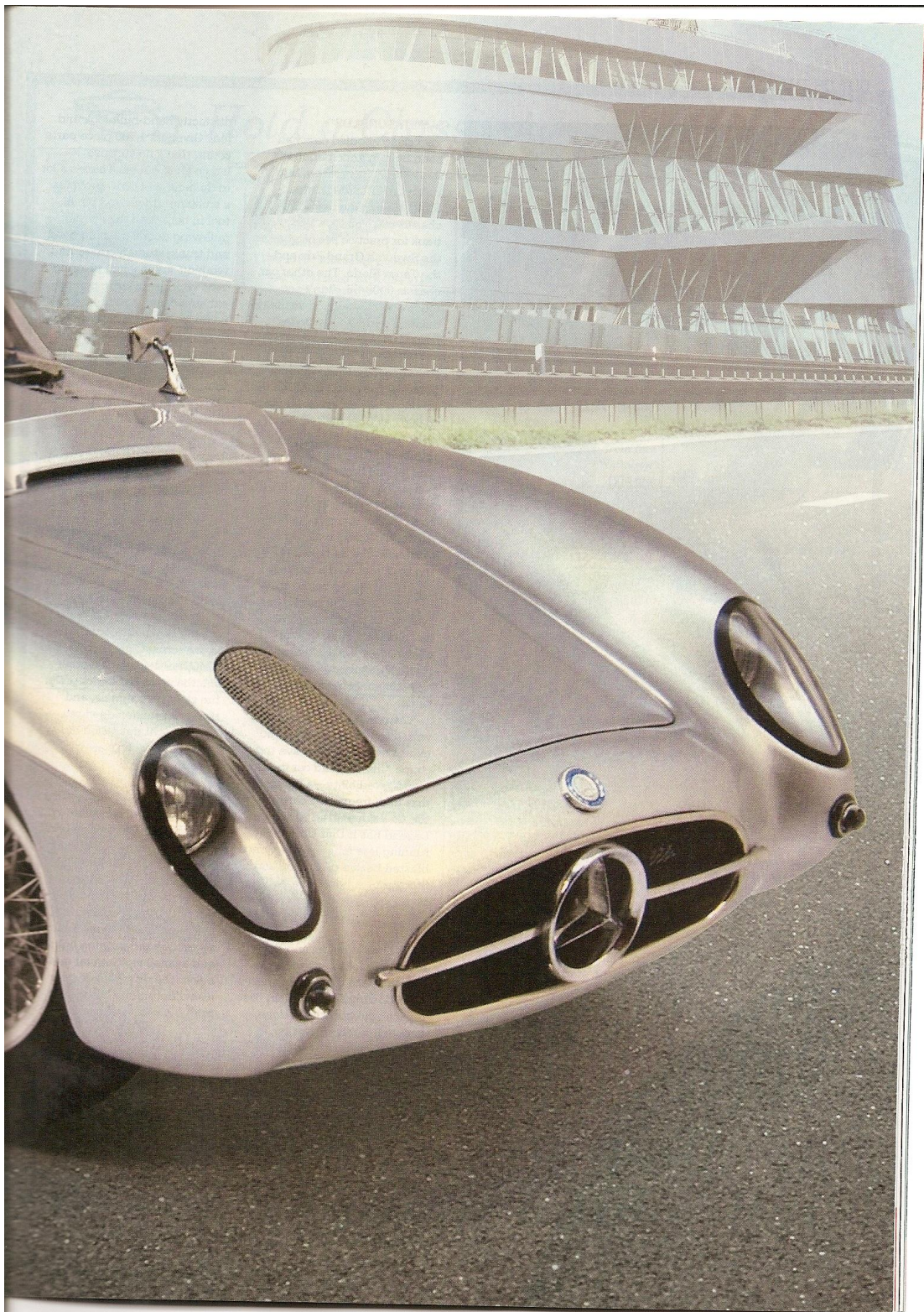
OUT OF THE **BOX** BY JOE KELLY JR.

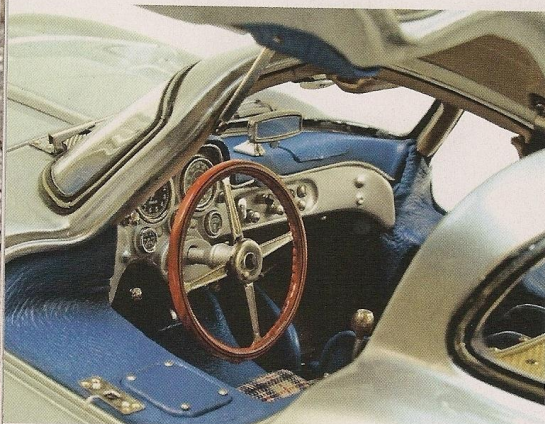
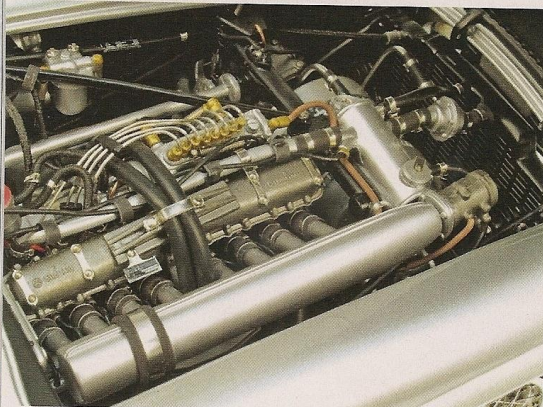


Rudi's Ride

CMC'S MERCEDES "UHLENHAUT"
300 SLR COUPE 1:18 | \$350

In 1936, Mercedes-Benz' Sporting Department was in trouble. Auto Union's rear-engined GP cars were trouncing them on every road course, and Mercedes' race drivers, though talented, could not overcome their own cars' stiff suspensions, overweight engines and abysmal handling. So, Mercedes broke off in mid-season, reorganized its competition division, and recruited relative newcomer Rudolf "Rudi" Uhlenhaut to head a freshly formed Racing department.





Top: Mercedes called the 300SLR's engine "Sleeping Otto," a tip of the hat to its tucked-in 33-degree angle and its eight cylinders. It's wildly complete in scale. Check out the impressive materials list—and the legible serial tag on the cam cover. Above: The details under the gull-winged doors are incredible, with real plaid-patterned textile and pliable, blue-dyed leather covering the seat cushions, the door sills, and the upper dash.

EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES

Uhlenhaut was a rare find. An engineer who was also a talented driver, Rudi could "read" a car at speed, find its weaknesses, and think through modifications. His thoughts paid off: starting with the game-changing W125 of 1937 and ending with the 300SLR of the mid-1950s, Mercedes was all but unbeatable in competition.

When Mercedes withdrew from auto racing in 1955, Uhlenhaut returned to passenger car development, though he didn't go quietly. The final note to Rudi's career in racing was a pair of closed-bodied 300SLRs he'd been developing for endurance contests—the glorious Uhlenhaut Coupes.

SUPER SURPLUS

Two closed-bodied cars had been built in anticipation of the 1956 racing season, but neither ever made it into competition. One came close; chassis 0007/55 took to the track for practice sessions at the Swedish Grand Prix and the Targa Florio. The other car, chassis 0008/55, didn't see much action at all and virtually disappeared into Mercedes' warehouse.

Uhlenhaut was given the track-seasoned car for his personal use—and use it he did, adding a few creature comforts to 0007 as time passed. Most obvious was a side-slung muffler on the passenger side, all the better to keep the peace; less so was the ducting eventually added to the car's hood to cool the cramped cabin. An acrylic shield was fashioned to smooth the air flow over the car's roof, and a luggage rack of sorts was bolted to the rear deck under the glass. The rest of the car, including its "elektron" magnesium-alloy body, tubular steel space frame, and race-tuned engine and suspension, remained the same.

The result was a street car with a top end of around 180 miles per hour. That gave the coupe "fastest road car in the world" credibility—a distinction that Rudi frequently certified on the no-holds-barred Autobahn. Legend has it that Uhlenhaut, running late for a meeting, once blasted between Munich and Stuttgart—a two and a half hour trip—in just under an hour.

RUDI'S RIDE

CMC likes legends, and this model is a follow-up to the great release they did of chassis 0008/55 a while back. That first replica was beautifully done, and well received, but the actual machine it was based on was an Uhlenhaut Coupe in name only.

Now, we have the real deal—Rudi's personal ride. The curves of the Karl Wilfert-designed body are rendered in a diecast shell covered in deep, glossy metallic silver, with a clear top coat. It's a fairly heavy piece with good shut lines and a

distinctly hand-built look and feel. Given its 1,700 piece parts count, that's no surprise. It's no shelf queen. There's a lot to do here, and CMC provides a small nut driver and panel tool to help with the opening gull-wing doors, opening hood and trunk, steerable front end, working suspension, pivoting vent window inserts, pop-off exhaust cover, and the four (six, if you include the *doppel* spares in the trunk) removable spoked wheels.

Those hand-laced units, left unpainted, are a tip-off to CMC's love for noble materials. Whether polished, photo-etched, or machined, real metal is everywhere—on the muffler, in the side vents, and in the bent and folded wiper arms against the front glass. Most impressive are the double barrel exhaust dumps on the side and the tidy little three-pointed star and signage on the rear deck, standing above the paint in scale-correct relief.

One of the difficulties in scaling down an icon like this is correctness, and in this area, CMC has done well. Details like the cross bar in the grille, the clear turn signals, and the rectangular side-view mirror might get called out by someone who's seen 0007 recently. Go back in time, however, and you can find factory images of Rudi with a road-registered car (plate W22-6962) that looks remarkably like this model—whether or not the flyer inside the CMC box says the grille bar has been removed, which it obviously has not. Other, smaller details, like the three-element taillights, secondary red running lights, and a small rectangular opening below the driver's side door also differentiate the model from the earlier release.

FULL TILT

The forward-hinged hood allows an unobstructed view of the 310-horsepower 3-liter straight eight—one of the most advanced engines of its time, with desmodromic valve actuation, Bosch direct fuel injection, and a block and head made from sheets of silumin alloy. Just like



Above: This is the view of the SLR most folks got with Rudi Uhlenhaut at the wheel. CMC has not only replicated the car's shape, they've sweated even the smallest detail—like the scale-correct badging on the car's trunk—and incorporated it seamlessly.

Mercedes, CMC tilted the mill 33 degrees to the right, all the better to fit under the car's streamlined hood. The beautifully cast and texture finished block and DOHC head are bedecked with rubber hoses, steel injector piping, and tiny stainless steel clamps with rubber gasketing. The finesse of the smallest of details is astonishing; part numbers are cast into the cam cover, and the engine's ID tag—four millimeters in size—is fixed in place with a pin-sized cover bolt. Here's the killer: it's legible.

The rest of the engine bay is equally amazing. In front of the motor, twin inboard drum brake assemblies are buried beneath a complex of intake

and cooling pipes, and connect to the front wheels with articulated half shafts. Chassis braces, pipes, and wires enter and exit the area, with the overall effect being one of realism almost to the point of overkill.

The same feeling carries into the cockpit, where the seats and wide door sills—made necessary by the car's tube frame—are covered in blue leather. The fine-grained hide is also on the door panels, and wrapped around and over the SLR's dash. More leather covers the side-slung transmission hump, and real plaid fabric inserts are used for the seat centers. The knobs on the dash, the chromed surrounds on the

gauges, and all of the tiny metal fasteners everywhere add a sprinkling of eye candy.

Open the trunk lid, and twin spares are mounted to the frame with central nuts. Use the included tool to remove the tires (if you dare—it takes a bit of patience), and you'll be treated to more chassis detail, including the fuel tank, and more plumbing and wiring. Under the car, the smooth belly pan is dotted with cast-in rivet detailing, a few openings for the brass drain plug and suspension adjusting bolts, a tiny drip tube, and a brace of stamped metal vent panels. Press the rear wheels in, and you can watch the lower suspension arms flex.

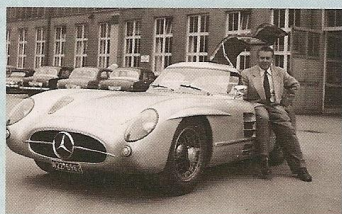
HANDS ON

That's the fun of a model like this—it's a beauty on display, but it really engages you when in hand. And, typical of this maker, the "wow" factor is high. Little things, like the polished steel used for the side-vent strakes, and the intricate hinges and struts on the opening panels, pull viewers in for a closer look. Impeccable assembly and metallic sheen keep you coming back for more.

Like the car it so closely replicates, this one's a world-beater. Somewhere up there, Rudi Uhlenhaut is smiling. ■

SOURCES

CMC cmc-modelcars.com



DRIVING AMBITION

Rudi Uhlenhaut made his driving talents apparent at a tire and suspension testing session at the Nürburgring in 1936. When hired guns Rudolf Caracciola and Manfred von Brauchitsch had to leave, Rudi calmly strapped on a helmet and goggles and flew a W25 race car around the dangerous course, cutting lap times that rivaled the professional pilots' best. Needless to say, the Mercedes corporate brass was impressed, but banned Rudi from competition. He was too valuable.

BIG MUFF

The side-slung silencer that Mercedes used on Rudi's coupe isn't currently mounted to the car, and that presented a problem to CMC whilst measuring the rare SLR at the Mercedes Museum. Fortunately, the original unit was found—road worn, dusty, but complete—in a sub-basement in Stuttgart.

