

ROAD & TRACK®

217 MPH!

FASTEST STREET-LEGAL CARS IN AMERICA



**Mario
Andretti
DRIVES THE:**

- McLaren F1
- Ferrari 550 Maranello
- Ruf Porsche CTR 2
- Hennessey Viper 600 GTS
- Lingenfelter Corvettes
- Toyota Supra Turbo by HKS



AUGUST 1998 \$3.50

Canada \$4.50 UK £2.30
<http://www.roadandtrack.com>

AOL keyword: road





EAST TIMES AT FORT STOCKTON

Mario Andretti helps us find the fastest street-legal car in America



BY ANDREW BORNHOP

PHOTOS BY GUY SPANGENBERG & BRIAN BLADES
CHARTS BY TIM BARKER

MARIO ANDRETTI RETIRED from full-time racing four years ago, but it doesn't seem like he's been gone that long. Maybe it's because he still accompanies his son Michael to all the CART races. Or maybe it has something to do with those Texaco commercials. Whatever the reason, there's one thing we can say for sure about Mario Andretti—his status as an American racing legend is backed by a résumé that's as long and laden with success as you'll ever find.

He has won in everything he's driven—midgets, sprint cars, stock cars, Indy cars and Formula 1 cars. He's won championships too—the most significant being his 1978 Formula 1 crown. In his 35-year career, he's daz-

■ So, you think Mario Andretti has slowed down now that he's retired? No way. Case in point: this McLaren F1, which he drove well past the 200-mph mark on Fort Stockton's 7.7-mile high-speed oval.



■ O-Dark-Thirty: Numbers are drawn out of Mario's helmet to determine the starting order. John Lingenfelter (smiling, at right) looks like he knows his Vettes will exceed 200 mph.

zled 'em at Daytona, drunk the milk at Indy and had Chris Economaki say his name at least a thousand times. What's more, he's driven for the likes of Andy Granatelli, Enzo Ferrari, Colin Chapman and, on one occasion, even Frank Williams. And now, add *Road & Track* magazine to that list.

That's right, Andretti readily accepted our offer to top-speed test some of the fastest street-legal cars in America. "Sounds like fun," said Mario, his appetite perhaps whetted by the chance to drive a McLaren F1.

His task was simple in description, difficult in execution: We wanted him to wring every last bit of speed out of these cars, all of which are licensed for the street. This would take place at the very same track in Texas where Phil Hill, America's only other F1 World Champion, drove in a similar test back in our June 1995 issue (we decided that having America's only two F1 World Champions drive for us provided an added dimension to the test). This time, however, we weren't limited to American cars; rather, we assembled a group from the U.S., Europe and Japan. And we hoped some would have the ability to reach and exceed that magical 200-mph mark.

In addition to having the McLaren F1 (the same car we tested in December 1997) on hand, we had two Corvettes from Lingenfelter Performance Engineering (a C5 and a ZR-1), a box-stock Ferrari 550 Maranello, a Toyota Supra Turbo modified by HKS, a Venom 600 GTS Viper from Hennessey Motorsports and a narrow-body Ruf CTR 2 that Alois (Louis) Ruf airfreighted from Germany to Dallas and drove to Fort Stockton with his wife, Estonia. (There are CTR 2s licensed in the U.S. but they have the wild-looking wider "fat boy" bodies that aren't good for top speed.) A potent group indeed, with an average bhp of 506!

One important caveat was made clear from the start: After the top-speed testing, we'd have each of the cars tailpipe-tested to see if they complied with emissions laws. If they didn't, well, their maximum speeds simply would not be factored into our final test results.

Our venue, kindly put at our disposal by the folks at Bridgestone and Firestone, was the 7.712-mile high-speed oval at Fort Stockton, Texas (elevation 3030 ft.), which has a pair of 1.5-mile straights and two constant-radius corners of approximately 2.3

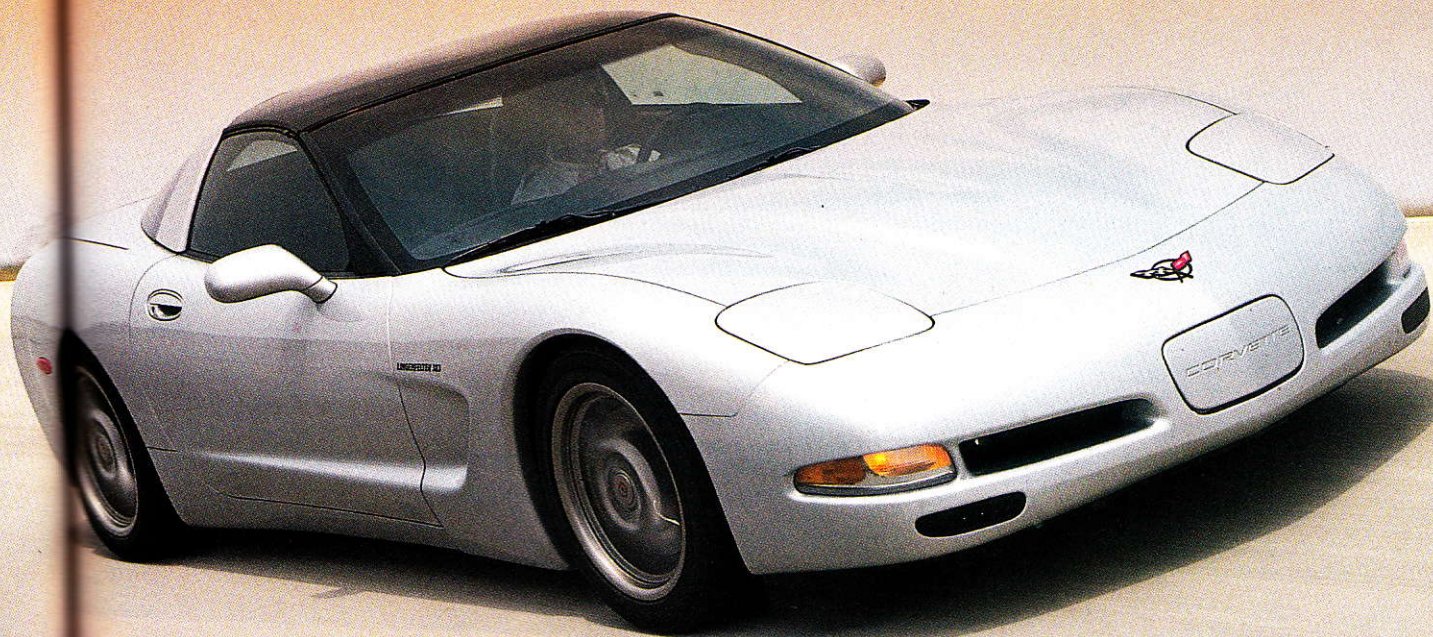


miles in length. Each corner has 15-degree banking in its outer lane, meaning a car can be driven at 140 mph on that part of the track without any steering input. This oval has no guardrails, so a slight miscue could send a car sailing off into the desert.

On test day, smoke from the raging Mexican wildfires cast an eerie pall over the desert, almost as if there was a solar eclipse. But you tend to forget about such things when cars of this caliber are awakened and clear their fuel-injected throats in preparation for their respective runs. Taking advantage of the cool morning air, we began early, drawing numbers out of Mario's helmet to determine the oh-so-important starting order.

Without further ado, here are the fastest street-legal cars in America, as they took to the track, with all top speeds recorded by our trusty Stalker radar gun.

Mario: *A stock Corvette should be able to run 170-plus. But with this engine pushing the car past 200 mph, it's quite clear to me that the aerodynamics haven't been studied at this speed. This car feels a little wiggly, and it doesn't feel like it has much front or rear downforce. I'm really having to drive it. I came off the corner at about 190 mph and it was a little hairy on the exit. It had a slight oversteer that held. But I wouldn't want to do that too many times!*



Lingenfelter Corvette 383

AS THIS SILVER rocket blasted past us and shot toward the timing trap, the oohs and the aahs from the paddock could be heard above the roar of John Lingenfelter's 383-cu.-in. V-8. But could it really have been a 214.1-mph

run, as our trap indicated? No it couldn't have, because Lingenfelter knew that at the 6000-rpm redline in 5th gear, his C5 was mathematically limited to 204.5 mph. Clearly, there was a problem with our trap.

So, after switching to our radar system, we sent the C5 out again. No stranger to putting his right foot down, Mario soon had the car going just as fast as before, coming down off the banking at 190 and shooting past our radar gun at a terminal velocity of 203.1 mph. "That's more like it," said Lingenfelter.

Though Mario wasn't particularly pleased with how the car felt aerodynamically (Lingenfelter says he's working on a body kit to improve the car's

rear downforce), nobody can deny this car's outstanding top speed. It's so fast, in fact, that the 200-mph wind sucked the passenger-side window out of its upper seal (a problem we've noticed while testing normal production Corvettes as well).

This phenomenal speed is the direct result of Lingenfelter's LS1 V-8 package, which bumps the output from the stock 345 bhp to a stout 450. Because Chevy's aluminum V-8 can't be bored, Lingenfelter bumps it up to nearly 383 cu. in. solely through an increase in stroke. At around \$17,000, the cost of his package is not cheap, but it involves some pretty serious stuff, not the least of which is removing and disassembling the engine. That's followed by a completely blueprinted rebuild using a new crankshaft (which requires some machining of the block for clearance), high-compression pistons, billet rods, a more aggressive camshaft and ported and polished heads. And on this C5, a prototype tubular exhaust manifold fed the stock catalytic converters and less restrictive mufflers.

LINGENFELTER CORVETTE 383

Engine aluminum-block ohv V-8
Displacement 6265 cc/382 cu. in.
Bore x stroke 99.1 mm x 101.6 mm/
3.90 in. x 4.00 in.
Compression ratio 10.7:1
Horsepower (SAE) 450 bhp @ 6100 rpm
Torque 440 lb-ft @ 4900 rpm
Transmission 6-speed manual
Final-drive ratio 3.15:1
Wheels cast magnesium;
17 x 8½ f, 18 x 9½ r
Tires Michelin Pilot SX MXX3; 245/45ZR-17 f,
275/40ZR-18 r

The final drive had also been changed, a 3.15:1 replacing the stock 3.42:1 ratio.

Did it surprise anybody that Lingenfelter was able to bring a 200-mph C5 Corvette to our test? Not a bit.

Toyota Supra Turbo, modified by HKS

UNLIKE THE OTHER cars in this test—each of which had at least one handler and one mechanic on hand—this Toyota Supra Turbo was simply shipped to the track and left at our disposal. Do you think Toyota had confidence in its car?

It should have. This HKS-modified Supra performed flawlessly, streaking to an impressive (and quiet!) maximum speed of 183.6 mph. Said Toyota's Jeremy Barnes (by phone): "We wanted to build a car that had all the reliability of an everyday Toyota. Just as important,

we wanted a car that made everybody smile. But we wanted it to be so potent that half the people who ride in it will be afraid to get back in the car!"

Well, Mario didn't find the car scary at all, calling this Supra "absolutely stable." Another apt description: "absolutely affordable." That's because for less than \$10,000, you can turn your stock Toyota Supra Turbo into a car that easily breaks 180 mph. Without a sacrifice in driveability.

All the work done to this Supra is of the bolt-on variety, work that can be accomplished by any mechanically adept person with proper tools. In this case, though, it was handled by HKS, the firm that makes the bulk of the engine enhancements. The most important of these is the pair of large ball-bearing turbos that send their charge through a monstrous intercooler.

At full boost (17.4 psi), this dohc inline-6 puts out 380 bhp at the rear wheels, which, loosely translated, means there is about 420 bhp at the crankshaft. No wonder the Supra goes so fast. And no wonder that the 155-mph speed limiter had to be disconnected!

TOYOTA SUPRA TURBO BY HKS

Engine iron-block twin-turbo dohc inline-6
Displacement 2997 cc/183 cu. in.
Bore x stroke 86.0 mm x 86.0 mm/
3.39 in. x 3.39 in.
Compression ratio 8.5:1
Horsepower (SAE) est 420 bhp @ 6200 rpm
Torque 358 lb-ft @ 5800 rpm
Transmission 6-speed manual
Final-drive ratio 3.13:1
Wheels 3-piece modular;
18 x 8 f, 18 x 9 r
Tires Pirelli P Zero; 245/40ZR-18 f,
265/35ZR-18 r



Mario: I was flat all the way around in this Supra. On the second lap, I downshifted into 5th gear, brought it back up to max revs and then upshifted into 6th, which helped the car pick up some additional speed. Maximum

speed was reached in 6th for sure, because 5th was too short. This car is stable. Absolutely stable. My cornering speed was somewhere around 170 mph, and you could feel the banking kill the speed a bit. Overall, this is a very driver-friendly car.

sold. It should be noted that racing versions of the McLaren F1 have long tail sections that almost certainly would add stability at such elevated speeds. Also notable was that this McLaren never came close to overheating (as it did in Phoenix traffic during our previously published road test), either during the top-speed runs or when being maneuvered slowly about the paddock for photography.

Final point: John Lingenfelter watched the McLaren go by and grinned when the top speed crackled in over the radio at 217. Was he simply impressed with this 627-bhp rocket? Or did he think his ZR-1 could beat it? We'll find out later.

Hennessey Venom 600 GTS

WHEN MARIO STRAPPED himself into the Venom 600, John Hennessey told him the car will make top speed in 5th, and to begin putting the hammer down whenever he felt comfortable. Well, Mario did just that and shot down the straightaway at a very impressive 205.4 mph. Unfortunately, just as he was nearing the end of the straight, the car's 602-bhp V-10 burst an oil-

cooler line, causing a huge cloud of smoke as oil sprayed onto the passenger-side exhaust manifold. Further, a small fire broke out, spreading beneath the cowl and melting some of the car's bodywork.

A big bumper for Hennessey. Vipers, because of their large frontal area, push a lot of air. To have one reach 205 mph, well, that means one thing—your engine must make gobs of power.

And Hennessey's does just that—602 bhp, to be exact. That's what you get with his Venom 600 GTS upgrade, which (through bore and stroke increases) raises the displacement of the Viper's V-10 to 514 cu. in. and leaves precious few parts of that massive aluminum powerplant unchanged.

Prior to the oil-line drama, Mario praised the car's stability while cornering, a trait Hennessey says is directly at-

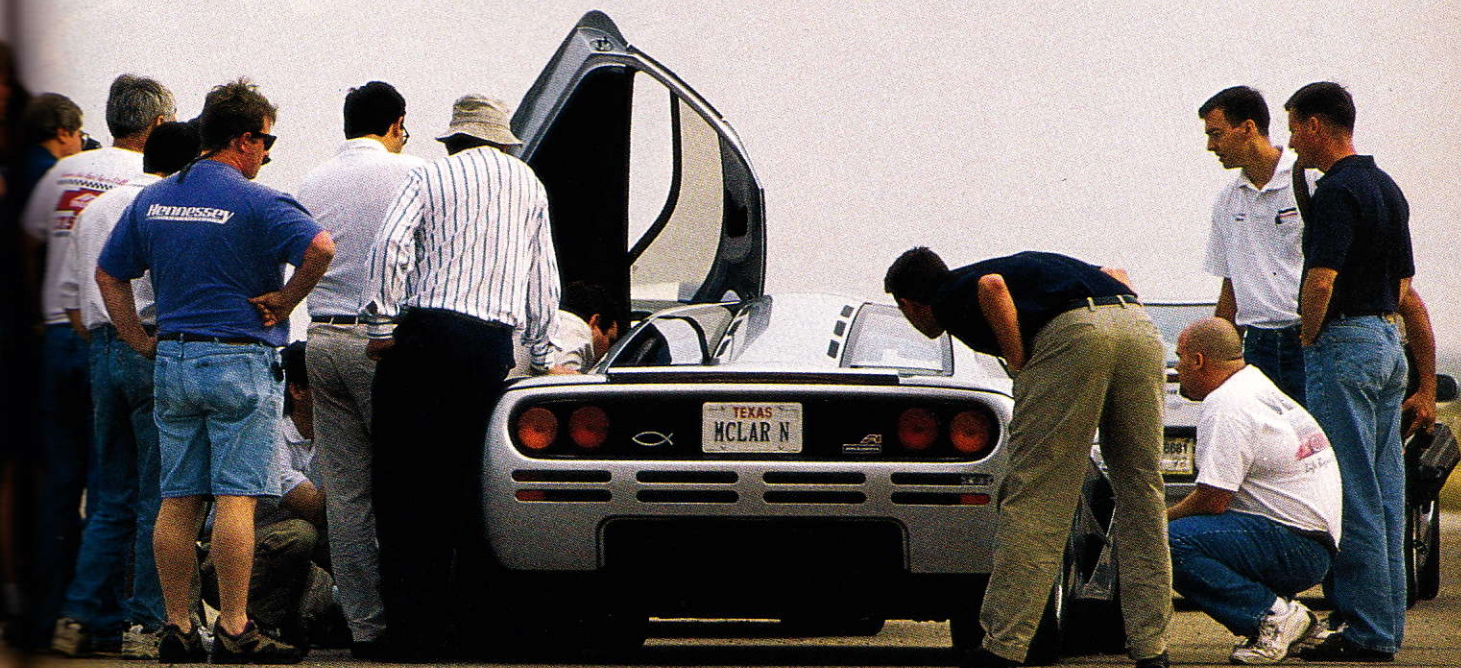


tributable to his VenomAero front and rear fascias that significantly reduce lift.

Fortunately, Hennessey had a slightly less potent Viper on hand, a Venom 550 that reached a maximum speed of 189 mph, right at the engine's 6200-rpm rev limit. Unfortunately, the timing chain broke as the rev limiter kicked in repeatedly, allowing the pis-

Mario: *Overall, a very impressive car. But I was really surprised at how aerodynamically unstable it was. Absolutely unstable. I was taking the corners at about 200 mph, but probably could have taken them quite a bit quicker if the back end hadn't wanted to keep hanging itself out.*

This really caught me by surprise. I never thought it was going to move around the way it did. Also, the speedometer was really optimistic, indicating that I had hit 240 mph, when I was really only going 217. Nevertheless, it's the only car that I actually had to use the brakes before going into the corners to feel safe. That was a scary 217.



Mario: This car has quite good aerodynamic balance at high speed. I would say that in the corners the Viper has been the quickest car so far. I just felt like I could really hang it out in this car. Typical of a high-torque engine in that you reach terminal velocity early. You don't

build speed like in the McLaren, where it just feels like you are always accelerating. With the Viper I came off the corner and it was almost immediately at top speed. John told me it would pull 6500 rpm in 5th. I never saw 6500. I saw only 6300.



■ Mario waits helplessly as the Venom 600 catches fire, the result of a burst oil line that ended an impressive 205.4-mph run.

tons to make contact with the valves. Not a good day for Vipers in the West Texas desert. "If you're not breaking something every now and then," said Hennessey pragmatically, "you're not pushing the envelope hard enough." Nevertheless, he proved that a 200-mph Viper is indeed a reality.

HENNESSEY VENOM 600 GTS

Engine aluminum-block ohv V-10
 Displacement 8424 cc/514 cu. in.
 Bore x stroke 102.4 mm x 102.4 mm/
 4.03 in. x 4.03 in.
 Compression ratio 10.5:1
 Horsepower (SAE) 602 bhp @ 6200 rpm
 Torque 630 lb-ft @ 5100 rpm
 Transmission 6-speed manual
 Final-drive ratio 3.07:1
 Wheels cast magnesium;
 18 x 10 f, 18 x 13 r
 Tires Michelin Pilot MX3; 275/35ZR-18 f,
 335/30ZR-18 r

Ferrari 550 Maranello

WHEN MARIO BUCKLED into the box-stock 550 Maranello, Ferrari's Carlo Fiorani didn't tell him how to extract the most speed out of the car. No, he simply told him how to disable the alarm and shut off both the air conditioning and traction control. Indeed, this Ferrari is very much a production car—the only one in the group—laden with luxuries and not modified one bit

for this grueling top-speed test.

Which makes its speed of 193.4 mph all the more remarkable. A car that goes this fast isn't supposed to be so quiet or civilized.

Open the aluminum hood (complete with its ram-air scoop) and you'll see the soul of this titanium-colored Ferrari, a compact 65-degree V-12 that's a spiritual brother to the Italian company's last V-12 Formula 1 engine. As you'd expect, this beautiful 4-valve, 4-cam powerplant with dry-sump oiling sends its 485 bhp to the rear wheels via a rear-mounted 6-speed transaxle whose shifter moves through a characteristic stainless-steel shift gate.

Mario came away impressed with the aerodynamic stability of the Pininfarina-styled Maranello, which is the fruit of spending nearly 5000 hours in the wind tunnel. Besides having excellent front and rear downforce at speed, Ferrari says the Maranello is almost impervious to side winds.

As a front-engine berlinetta, the 550 Maranello perfectly embod-

ies what a modern Ferrari should be—an emotional car that's dynamically superb, esthetically pleasing and utterly comfortable without being cushy. Racing still runs deep in its veins.

This comfortable exotic—which laps the Fiorano test track more quickly than any 512—may not have reached 199 mph as the factory claims, but it's important to realize that its 193-mph run took place late in the morning, when the temperature had climbed to 81 degrees.



Mario: *The best-feeling car so far. I was able to get up to speed earlier than usual because this car gives me the encouragement to do so. I wasn't going to gain much speed coming down the straight because I was able to take the corner near maximum velocity. On the banking I'd lose about*

200 revs, which I would pick back up very quickly on the straight. Very impressive. Very stable. I was able to maintain really good speed through the entire corner with my foot flat. I was having to drive the car, but it still felt very secure. The speedometer was optimistic, showing 207 mph.



After the test, Mario was asked to pick his favorite car. Without hesitation he responded, "the Maranello." Obviously enthused, Andretti elaborated: "If it were raining today, I still could've given you a hell of a run with that Maranello. I feel totally confident in that car." High praise indeed.

FERRARI 550 MARANELLO

Engine aluminum-block dohc V-12
 Displacement..... 5474 cc/344 cu. in.
 Bore x stroke..... 88.0 mm x 75.0 mm/
 3.46 in. x 2.95 in.
 Compression ratio..... 10.8:1
 Horsepower (SAE)..... 485 bhp @ 7000 rpm
 Torque..... 419 lb-ft @ 5000 rpm
 Transmission..... 6-speed manual
 Final-drive ratio..... 3.91:1
 Wheels..... cast magnesium;
 18 x 8½ f, 18 x 10½ r
 Tires..... Pirelli P Zero; 255/40ZR-18 f,
 295/35ZR-18 r

Lingenfelter Corvette ZR-1

WHEN WE ASKED John Lingenfelter to bring one of his C5 Corvettes to this test, he agreed but begged us to let him bring a second Vette, a ZR-1. "Why?" we asked. "Because it's the only car that will have a chance against the McLaren," said Lingenfelter.

Would we turn down such an offer? Never.

That's because Lingenfelter has been working with these 4-cam LT5 engines since 1991, and has developed a package that bumps the output of this aluminum-block V-8 from 405 bhp to an immense 620. This is accomplished through increased bore and stroke (which boost displacement from 350 to 415 cu. in.), high-compression pistons, billet rods, ported and polished cylinder heads, new camshafts, a larger throttle body and Lingenfelter's own intake plenum with Siamesed runners.

A few minutes before his car went out, however, John asked if his ZR-1 could make a run with the catalytic converter being bypassed. "Sure," we said, as long as his official top-speed run took place with the single cat—from a 1986 Corvette—hooked up.

When the open-pipe ZR-1 took to the track, it commanded our attention.

As expected it was extremely loud and fast, a yellow streak zooming past the paddock at a blisteringly quick 218.1 mph. And everybody could see that



the tail of the car—fitted with a custom Lingenfelter rear fascia—was being pushed to the ground by down-force. At the same time, the car's nose was riding high, like the bow of a boat skimming across the water, which couldn't have helped aerodynamics.

This apparently didn't faze Mario, who said the front end felt very positive. In fact, he said the ZR-1—which had its side mirrors removed for the top-speed run—felt much more secure than the C5, even in a straight line.

When Mario went back out in the car with the catalytic converter hooked up properly, the speed fell drastically, to 201.5 mph, which equates to 6100 rpm in 5th gear. Lingenfelter was disappointed in having used 3.07:1 rear-end gears instead of 3.45s, which would have put the engine closer to its 7500-rpm power peak. "We just ran out of time," said Lingenfelter. "We'd have been in good shape if we'd had another week or two." Given that time, he'd have hooked the ZR-1 up with a pair of

catalytic converters from a Viper, which cost only 10 bhp compared to straight exhaust. With Viper cats, correct gearing and less front lift, Lingenfelter's ZR-1 could have conceivably reached 220 mph and beaten the million-dollar McLaren. But it wasn't to happen this day. "Have another top-speed test," said Lingenfelter. "We'll make you happy."

Ruf CTR 2

IN MARIO'S FIRST run in the Ruf CTR 2 he reached 190 mph and immediately came in, complaining of an instability that caused the car to change lanes and be totally unpredictable. Alignment and caster, insisted Mario, had to be checked. Ruf himself went out in the car, only to confirm Mario's feelings. Fortunately, the proving grounds had an alignment machine that allowed Thomas Fisher, Ruf's mechanic, to check all the suspension settings. Sure enough, problems with camber and wheel alignment were found, perhaps related to how the car was cinched down for its airborne trip across the Atlantic.

When Mario went out a second time, he said the 520-bhp CTR 2 (Road Test, February 1997) felt much

better but still not totally correct. Even so, he was able to reach a top speed of 201.5 mph, a respectable run that's still well below the 211-mph run of the famous Yellow Bird CTR that dominated our "World's Fastest Cars" test in July of 1987.

This particular car, a 2wd CTR 2 painted in the same *Blutengelb* (Blossom Yellow) color as the Yellow Bird, also had a slight wander down the straightaway. But it's also important to realize that Mario's last run took place in the early afternoon, when the mercury had shot up to 98 degrees.

On a cooler day, and given the right alignment, camber and caster, the speeds would have undoubtedly been

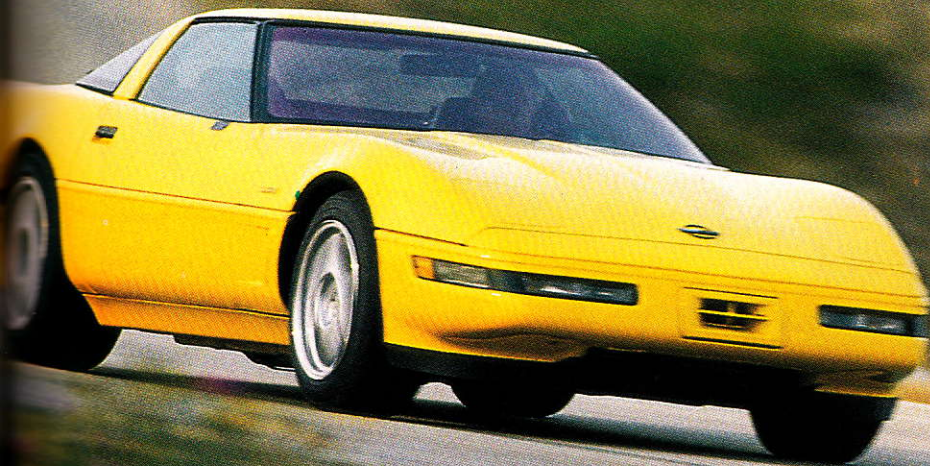


LINGENFELTER CORVETTE ZR-1

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Engine | aluminum-block dohc V-8 |
| Displacement | 6796 cc/415 cu. in. |
| Bore x stroke | 101.6 mm x 104.8 mm/ 4.00 in. x 4.13 in. |
| Compression ratio | 12.0:1 |
| Horsepower (SAE) | 620 bhp @ 6900 rpm |
| Torque | 510 lb-ft @ 5300 rpm |
| Transmission | 6-speed manual |
| Final-drive ratio | 3.07:1 |
| Wheels | cast alloy; 17 x 9½ f, 17 x 11 r |
| Tires | Michelin Pilot SX MXX3; 275/40ZR-17 f, 315/35ZR-17 r |

Mario: *I came off the corner at close to 200 mph and it pulled all the way to the end of the straight. And I know I reached terminal velocity. The pull is strong. The car is quite stable, and though it's a bit bouncy, it's predictable. That gave me the confidence I*

needed to build up enough speed in the corner to make sure I reached terminal velocity on the straight. With straight pipes it pulled really hard through the corners. But actually, I think the car did very respectably with the catalytic converter hooked up.





Mario: Properly set up, this car will go considerably quicker. It was all I could handle. I think we showed 5800 rpm on the tachometer. And I was on it hard. I mean I was hanging on. If I could've had a little more stability through the corner and gotten more speed earlier, perhaps I could have picked up 2 or 3 more miles per hour. I think this car will go quicker, but it's scary. On the banking it's okay, but coming off, the car would tend to move over a lane. To be honest with you, I probably went harder than I should have from a safety standpoint, but I wanted to be as fair as possible to Ruf. If he had said, "Let's try this another time," I'd have said, "No, not at least until something else has been done to the car."



■ Mario offers Louis Ruf some possible ways of making the CTR 2 more stable at speed.

higher. McLaren quick? We don't know. But Mario did make it clear that Ruf's air-cooled flat-6 had plenty of power to spare.

Still, Ruf was disappointed. This car truly had an honest shot at beating the 217-mph McLaren. Somehow, a car

that had been so stable on late-night *Autobahn* sojourns had suddenly become a handful. But Ruf remained optimistic. And it was gratifying to see Ruf stay in the 200-mph club that he pretty much established back in 1987. Don't worry, Louis, there will be a next time. By then, however, Ruf will have built his last (28th) CTR 2, so who knows what kind of car he'll bring. Whatever it is, you can bet it will be fast and dead reliable, as his cars have always been.

Yes, but do they pass emissions?

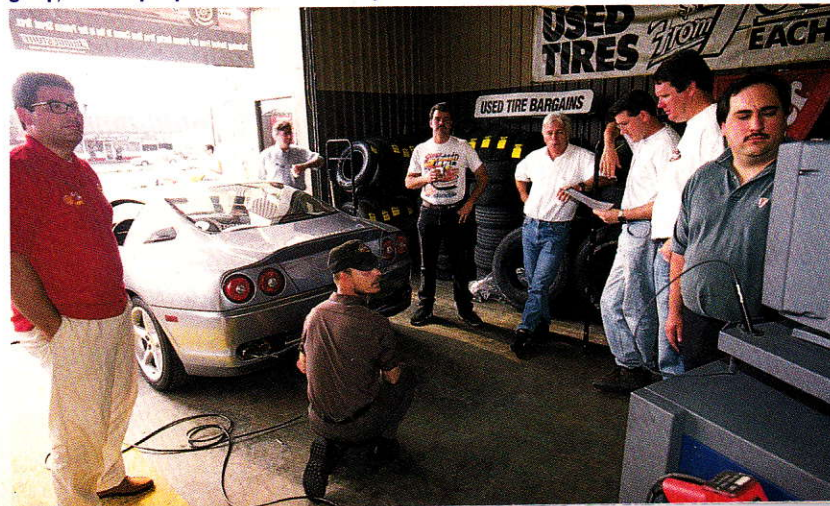
IN RURAL TEXAS, emissions testing isn't required, but in major cities like Houston and Dallas, it is. And for this story, we required that each car pass the

state's simple tailpipe test. Conducted at idle and at 2300–2500 rpm, unburned hydrocarbons (HC) must be no more than 220 parts per million and carbon monoxide can't exceed 1.2 percent.

On the morning after our top-speed test, the six surviving cars gathered at the Firestone Tire shop in Midland for a 4-gas analysis test using a tailpipe sniffer. And yes, there was a surprise.

All cars passed except the two Lin-genfelter Corvettes, which at idle pumped out more than twice the allowed number of unburned hydrocarbons. "I about fell out of my chair when those cars didn't pass," said John, who later confirmed that his cars weren't running right. On the ZR-1, the number 7 sparkplug had eaten its electrode, causing a miss. On the C5,

■ Ferrari's Carlo Fiorani (left) looks on with satisfaction as the 550 Maranello is subjected to the tailpipe sniffer test, which it passed with flying colors. By far the cleanest-running car of the group, the 550 pumped out an immeasurably low amount of carbon monoxide (see chart at right).



RUF CTR 2

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Engine | aluminum-case twin-turbo sohc flat-6 |
| Displacement | 3600 cc/220 cu. in. |
| Bore x stroke | 100.0 mm x 76.4 mm/ 3.94 in. x 3.01 in. |
| Compression ratio | 8.0:1 |
| Horsepower (DIN) | 520 bhp @ 5800 rpm |
| Torque | 505 lb-ft @ 4800 rpm |
| Transmission | 6-speed manual |
| Final-drive ratio | 3.44:1 |
| Wheels | forged magnesium; 19 x 8½ f, 19 x 10 r |
| Tires | Bridgestone Potenza S-02; 245/35ZR-19 f, 285/30ZR-19 r |

John traced the problems to GM's catalytic converters, whose ceramic substrate doesn't hold up well to the heat of sustained full-throttle operation.

In all fairness to Lingenfelter, his C5 did do two additional laps early in the day—15 miles at nearly constant full-throttle—because of our timing problems. A pair of brand-new cats for the C5—installed back at his shop in Indiana—fixed things immediately, said Lingenfelter.

In spite of the credible explanations, the Lingenfelter cars still did not pass the emissions test that day, meaning their speeds are not factored into the results. Nor is the speed of the Hennessey Venom 600 GTS, which never had a chance to be smogged.

So, of the seven cars that competed in this test, only four qualify as legal. And of these, the McLaren F1 reigns as the fastest street-legal car in America. Even rev-limited at 217 mph, nothing legal comes close. Had the Ruf CTR 2 not had stability problems, it would have had a better chance. But for now Louis Ruf should be content with knowing that his CTR 2 is the second-quickest street-legal car in America. Knowing Ruf for many years, we doubt that he will ever be content with second.

The last time we conducted a top-speed test (two years ago in Texas), not a single car exceeded 200 mph. This year, five of seven did, although three didn't make the final cut because of attrition or emissions trouble.

And just how did Mario feel? Well, he found 200 mph to be a "magical barrier" in these street cars. "Below 200," said Mario, "driving these cars was almost a piece of cake." But above 200, "it's a whole new dimension," primarily because of the unstudied aerodynamics at those speeds.

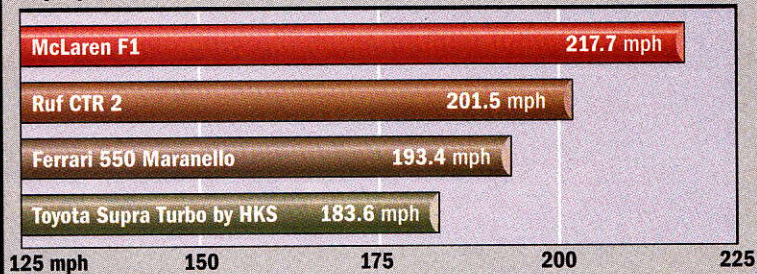
Ten years ago, would anybody have guessed that we'd see so many street-licensed cars crack the 200-mph mark? Would anybody have guessed that you'd need a driver of Mario Andretti's caliber to extract the most speed out of a bunch of *street-legal* cars? The answer to both: an emphatic "no."

Speed. It's always the focus when car enthusiasts gather. And though times change, one thing never does: manufacturers and tuners constantly trying to extract the best possible speed out of their beloved cars. As Mario Andretti mused, "Boys will always be boys."

And on that day in Texas, Mario was just one of the boys, driving past us at speeds that would curl your hair. Onward and upward!

The Results...

Top speed

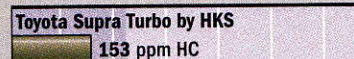
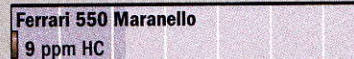
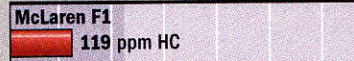
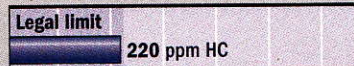


Disqualified cars

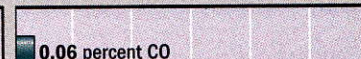
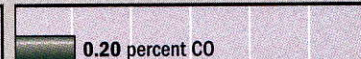
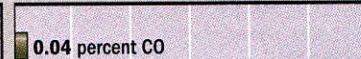
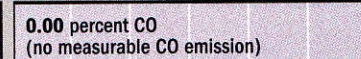
Hennessey Venom 600 GTS, 205.4 mph (mechanical trouble)
 Lingenfelter Corvette 383, 203.1 mph (failed emissions)
 Lingenfelter Corvette ZR-1, 201.5 mph (failed emissions)

Texas Vehicle Emissions Standards

Unburned hydrocarbons (HC)
in parts per million (at idle)



Carbon monoxide (CO)
as a percentage of emissions (at idle)



CONTACTS

Ameritech (McLaren F1), 190 George Washington Hwy, Ridgefield, Conn. 06877 (203) 744-0844, (203) 743-9771 (fax)

Ferrari North America, Inc., 250 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632, www.ferrari.com

HKS USA, Inc., 2355 Mira Mar Ave., Long Beach, Calif. 90815, (562) 494-8068, (562) 494-1768 (fax)

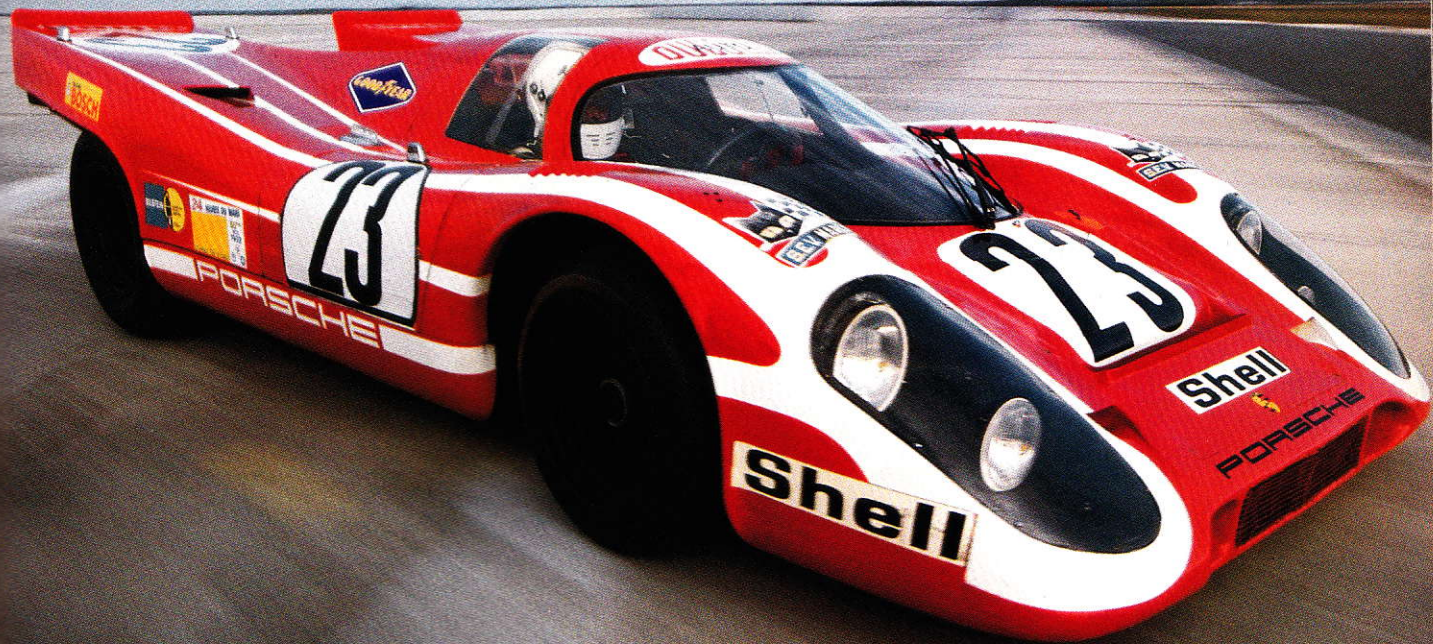
Hennessey Motorsports, 18000 Groeschke Rd., Hangar C-1, Dallas, Texas 77084, (281) 579-2223, (281) 579-2724 (fax), www.hennesseymotorsports.com

Lingenfelter Performance Engineering, 1557 Winchester Rd., Decatur, Ind. 46733, (219) 724-2552, (219) 724-8761 (fax), www.lingenfelter.com

McLaren Cars Limited, Genesis Business Park, Albert Drive, Woking, Surrey GU21 5RW, England

Ruf Automobile GmbH, Mindelheimer Strasse 21, D 8772 Pfaffenhausen, Germany, 011 49 8 265 1012, 011 49 8 265 1213 (fax)

Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., 19001 S. Western Ave., Torrance, Calif. 90501, www.toyota.com

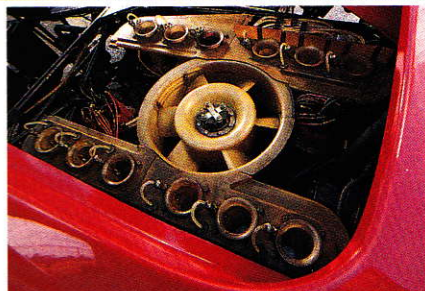


917. Unable to believe that any racing car builder could produce 25 identical cars, the FIA demanded that all the cars be shown for inspection at the same time. Thus, one cold day in April members of the FIA visited Stuttgart and were forced to accept that Porsche had done the seemingly impossible and fully met all their requirements.

Because of the immense work load, there was little time for testing and development. With crashes during testing and the death of the first private owner, John Woolfe, in a fiery accident on the first lap of the 1969 Le Mans race, the 917 quickly acquired a fearsome reputation.

One day in April, 1969, whilst working in the garden of my Lancashire, England, home, I received a call from Weissach to "come and test the new 917." Alarm bells rang. Why me? They had 10 would-be heroes living within a couple of hours of the factory. Promising to call back within the hour, I rang co-driver Jo "Seppi" Siffert in Switzerland. "Seppi, have you tested the 917?" A long silence—"No, no, Bri-on, we let ze uzzers find out what breaks first!" It turned out I had an important prior engagement that could not be broken.

With an unprecedented 10-driver, five-car team driving 3.0-liter Langheck (long-tail) 908/01 coupes



and short-tail open-top 908/02s, Porsche quickly clinched the 1969 championship—but still did not win the greatest prize of all, Le Mans. In the closest finish to date, Jacky Ickx, with a brilliant final session, partnered by Jackie Oliver driving the Gulf Oil-sponsored, John Wyer-managed, GT40, gained the victor's laurels by 30 seconds from poor Hans Herrmann and Gérard Larrousse. Given the choice of a new untested 908 spyder with a long tail, and a 917 coupe, co-driver Seppi and I drove both in practice and decided that our best chance lay with the 908. Indeed, three hours into the race we were leading—but alas, an hour later we were out with an overheated gearbox.

For 1970 it was decided that John Wyer's J.W. Automotive Engineering, backed by Gulf Oil, would run the factory-supported 917 team, Seppi and I being retained by Porsche; Pedro



■ If you were the competition, chances are that the taillights were all you saw of the 917K, Porsche's first overall Le Mans winner. Huge, 580-bhp flat-12 warmed the backside of driver who sat in the rather cramped cockpit.