



This four-door coupe has the power and poise to back up its extraordinary tuner looks.

# THE *EXTREME* DREAM

Treating his brand new CLS500 like a blank sheet of paper, this car's owner has made his automotive vision an AMG powered reality

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**W**HEN THE C219 MERCEDES-BENZ CLS WAS INTRODUCED TO the motoring world, it was like nothing else on the road. It was that sleek, four-door coupe look, coupled with the all telling three-pointed star, that first attracted Brent Khelawan to the CLS. But it is obvious just by looking at this car's particularly wholesome form that he has taken it far beyond the everyday CLS and turned it into something else altogether.

This rather dashing three-pointed star started life as an 'ordinary' 2006 CLS500 in Alabaster White with Sunset Red leather – a covetable car in its own right – as ordered by Khelawan from Mercedes-Benz in December 2005. "Even at that point I knew what I wanted the car to be," Khelawan begins. "I'd ordered the Lorinser bodykit before the car even arrived!" Once it did arrive, Khelawan had it for about three weeks before he sent it off for the next six weeks to undergo the first of many surgeries, leading to what the car has become today: a highly modified masterpiece of engineering and style.

Khelawan is no stranger to the world of car modifications, but this Mercedes-Benz coupe would take him into a whole different realm. While he didn't have all the expertise, he is a master of relationship building and over the course of this project he assembled an impressive team of experts to do some very heavy lifting, coupled with an equally impressive roster of vendors supplying the ingredients to make his dream come to life.

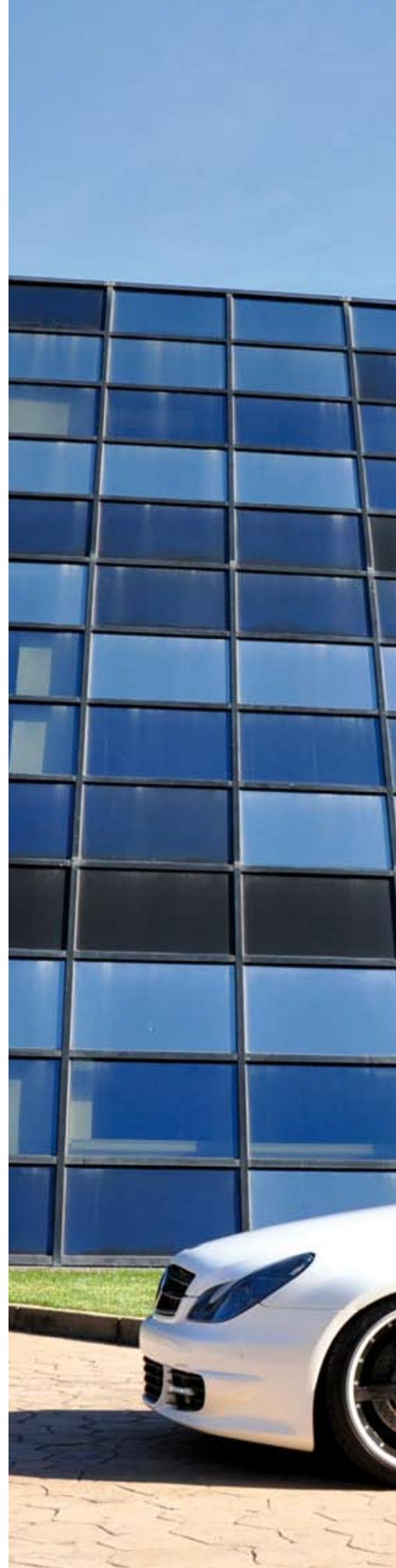
It was the fitment of that Lorinser bodykit that really got the ball rolling. Comprised of special front and rear bumpers, side skirts, roof panels and a bootlid spoiler, this kit lends the already sporting CLS body an aggressive posture beyond even what the factory AMG kits fitted to the CLS55 and CLS63 achieve. It still looks relatively subtle, though, in the same Alabaster White as the rest of the factory body, with the exception of the carbon fibre bootlid spoiler. The Lorinser ▶



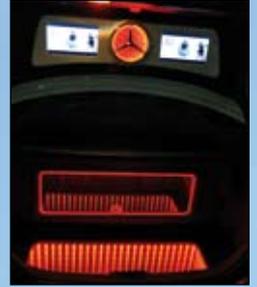
△ Alpine and Kicker provide the audiovisual might.



△ This CLS wears a beefy bodykit made by German tuner Lorinser.



“It is a highly  
modified  
masterpiece of  
engineering  
and style”



△ Believe it or not, what  
you are looking at is the  
inside of this car's boot!

△◁ Ultrasuede, leather  
and Alcantara adorn the  
cabin of this one-off CLS.





LEDs up front for a modern vibe, plus a RennTech lowering kit for a mean ride.

▷ styling kit is high quality, with a distinctly factory look, feel and finish.

Outside there are further modifications, carbon fibre featuring in the headlamp inserts, the grille slats and the boot mounted badging that just says '55' – but more on that later. And this carbon fibre is not just a vinyl overlay, it is the real deal, for which Khelawan literally went halfway round the world, sending parts to a vendor in south east Asia for the treatment. Beyond the carbon fibre, he has had the CLS's roof and drip rails professionally painted in high gloss black, providing a stark contrast to the bright white paint while also giving the illusion of a panoramic roof. Finally, the custom LED foglights are both effective and add a more modern touch to the front end.

### THE WHEEL DEAL

Complementing the body makeover is a set of Straight Five custom alloy wheels – 20x9.0J up front and 20x11.0J at the back – finished with a unique carbon fibre face, a white powder coated outer lip and black powder coated inner lip. Wrapping the wheels are Toyo Proxes 4 tyres in 255/30 front and 295/25 rear sizes. Impressive wheels to say the least, although they would probably be overkill on my pedestrian E-Class estate. Or would they? And while the CLS500 in stock form doesn't want for stopping power, the big wheels (and some performance upgrades yet to be discussed) meant that Khelawan wanted to beef up in that department. So the logical upgrade was a Brembo front and rear brake kit, painted white with custom red Brembo decals. These brakes not only look great behind the big wheels, they also take braking power to a whole new level.

The stylish interior of the standard CLS could have easily stood with the modified exterior, but that was not to be. Khelawan's vision included a comprehensive cabin overhaul as well. He and his team made a marked departure from strictly modern and moved towards modern classic with a sumptuous, double-diamond pattern, Ultrasuede

headlining and seat inserts surrounded by Sunset Red Alcantara and leather. The double-diamond pattern continues on the door panels as well as the subwoofer box.

What we also find inside the car is a veritable glossary of automotive audio and video gear worth more than all of the AV equipment in my house – probably more than my house itself! The in-car entertainment (or ICE, as I was informed) system was brought together by Opus Marketing and Kicker, and comprises two Kicker subwoofers, four Kicker amplifiers and eight Kicker QS Component speakers and tweeters. I must confess, I like the way the components keep doubling in number! The head unit is an Alpine INA-W910 coupled with an Alpine Imprint processor. There is also a black Nintendo Wii with a custom red CD gateway, neatly mounted between the rear seats underneath the array of amplifiers with their blue LEDs, all of which collude to make you feel like a passenger in a TIE fighter.

However, the boot is the pièce de résistance, audiovisually speaking. On the outside it looks like any other CLS boot (if you ignore the small spoiler), but opening it is like walking



△ Straight Five alloys with Toyo rubber and Brembo brakes.



△ Many companies were involved in this ambitious project.

through a door into Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. It is perhaps the most detailed boot I've ever laid eyes on, holding two Eiger Vision monitors mounted on either side of the illuminated Mercedes star, an infinity mirrored boot floor and acres more of the delectable diamond patterned Ultrasuede throughout. It makes me want to play Wii Sports Bowling standing behind the car, but I dare not ask.

### OPEN HEART SURGERY

The car as described and assembled to this point matched Khelawan's original vision perfectly. What he had not envisioned as part of the build was an engine swap. With a scant 36,000 miles on the original 302bhp, five-litre, M113 V8, Khelawan found himself in the enviable position of having acquired a supercharged, 5.4-litre, M113 V8 made by AMG from a wrecked, low mileage 211-series E55. Better still, he got the ECU as well. On the downside, he was not able to take the E55's Speedshift five-speed automatic transmission to mount along with the 469bhp motor. Khelawan and his trusted and daring mechanic, Eliazir Chavez – neither of whom were afraid to get their hands dirty – decided to throw caution to the wind against the advice of some well known tuners who told them it would never work, and fitted the AMG motor, teaming it with the CLS500's standard 7G-Tronic seven-speed automatic gearbox.

Khelawan located an expert in Mercedes-Benz VIN programming to address all the components that needed to be tweaked to accept the new motor, and after some long hours including Chavez, Khelawan and his garage, a motor hoist and some programming, the E55 V8 was installed and fired flawlessly. Unfortunately, it would only work in 'limp home' mode. That is until Khelawan and company discovered Mercedes' 'Dyno' mode, which effectively defeats all of the electronic nannies that watch over us: traction control, stability control and even ABS. In Dyno mode, the car runs and drives as it should, minus the



◀ The re-trim left no surface as standard.

▷△ An AMG V8 Kompressor from a 211 E55.

▷ Ultrasuede, mirroring and plenty of tech!



**This car was built with a lot of blood, sweat, heart and soul**

◀ Carbon fibre covers the slats on the grille.

▷ Khelawan had to work hard for his dream Benz.



electronic watchdogs – for better or worse. Khelawan admits that he drives it gently most of the time, for fear of over torquing the less robust seven-speed transmission. “It’s more than adequate for everyday driving,” he adds, a little unnecessarily, I can’t help but think!

Further modifications in the performance department include some extensive polishing of engine components, Kleemann performance headers with a white ceramic coating, a VRP Tuning carbon fibre air intake system and a Lorinser exhaust. In addition, Khelawan added a CLK63 oil filter housing, a heat exchanger with an upgraded Johnson CM30 pump and an additional engine oil cooler. An upgraded AMG alternator by Ohio Generator and a Quaife limited-slip differential round out the package. He also retained the factory self levelling suspension, but added a RennTech lowering kit that uses the factory system to raise and lower

the car. Slammed down, this Mercedes-Benz looks downright mean.

So, how does this CLS feel as a whole? Judged by the seat of the pants, the car is all Mercedes, from the smell of the leather to the feel of the steering wheel. At idle, the motor breathes more freely and emits a menacing rumble that promises – and delivers – a healthy punch. Thanks to Dyno mode (and the gearbox), you have to take care not to inject too much throttle at the outset for fear of stripping the gears and/or shredding the tyres. But once underway, a punch of throttle now and again releases the car’s inner demons, and the ride remains remarkably compliant thanks to the factory air suspension. Of course, as it requires moderate attention to drive, enjoying the many electronic extras is best done in show grounds or car parks. The grin on Khelawan’s face as he drives the CLS says it all. “I’m pretty

much in love with the car,” he effuses – and I don’t doubt it. This Mercedes-Benz was built with a lot of blood, sweat, heart and soul.

**ACHIEVING PERFECTION**

I really didn’t know what to expect when this car was described to me before I took the job. That said, to see the execution of this project, the attention to detail and the pride in the car and the marque, this is a side of Mercedes-Benz enthusiasm that I may not ever engage in (if for no other reason than I could never afford it), but I have a new found respect for.

I couldn’t help but ask what Khelawan had planned next for his impressive, custom CLS. “Well, I thought about a widebody kit, but I decided it would ruin the perfect factory lines. If anything, I’ll source the proper AMG transmission and install it. Then it would be perfect.” I can’t argue with that.

