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Health kick

A famous tuning name from the past is back with a whole new philosophy on improving the car so the driver feels better in every way

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▽ Rolf Hartge and his son Hendrik have started the company.



With 40 years experience in the industry behind him, Rolf Hartge has a long track record of ground breaking innovations



SAY THE WORD 'TUNING' AND ANY red blooded car enthusiast will instantly think of engine upgrades, spoilers, big wheels and a lower ride height. Now however, there is a new facet to the wonderful world of tuning that is the latest brainchild of Rolf Hartge.

For those racking your brains to place the name, Rolf Hartge was the man who, along with his brother Andreas, founded Carlsson back in 1989. The two brothers built Carlsson into an internationally renowned Mercedes tuner, and then sold the business at its hiatus in 2007.

Despite initially enjoying a well earned retirement, with cars and motorsport in his blood and many ideas continuing to bubble away in his fertile mind, it was no surprise that Rolf was unable to stay away from what was ostensibly his hobby. And so, in 2016 he and his son, Hendrik put together a small team of experienced specialists to stage a comeback, this time with a company bearing his own name.

Trademarked as Rolfhartge GmbH, the new company left the starting blocks an authorised partner of Daimler AG and also recognised as a vehicle manufacturer by the Kraftfahrt Bundesamt (KBA), Germany's Federal Motor Transport Authority.

The KBA certification means the company is allowed to apply its own chassis and engine numbers to the Mercedes and Mercedes-Maybach models on which offerings are based. It also means that partners around the world can apply for manufacturer import status.

With 40 years experience in the industry behind him, Rolf Hartge has a long track record of ground breaking innovations. The latent heat storage system that he introduced back in 1993 helps to reduce fuel consumption, emissions and engine wear is now standard in most modern cars. In the months before he sold Carlsson, Rolf Hartge entered into co-operation with the renowned fashion label Etienne Aigner to create bespoke V12 S-Class and CL-based models. These limited edition cars were truly *haute couture* on wheels.



△ Hartge is aiming at the Chinese market.



△▷ Long-wheel base allows for plenty of room.

▷ Standard Maybach styling cues remain.

With past achievements like that under his belt, Rolf's developing perspective of looking at the car as an extension of a client's lifestyle, rather than just transport, found his subsequent ideas evolving along the path that led to his latest venture.

KEEPING INDIVIDUAL

"A life without individuality is a life wasted," he says. "Individuality is just as much an end in itself as luxury, and our goal now is to create luxury products with innovative features tailored to the needs of real people.

"Simply going back to what we did at Carlsson or duplicating what is already on offer in the marketplace was not an option," Rolf explains. "Right from the start, Hendrik and I agreed that our new business should radically reinterpret the concept of luxury vehicle personalisation, supplementing the traditional meaning of tuning with totally fresh ideas centred around the occupants.

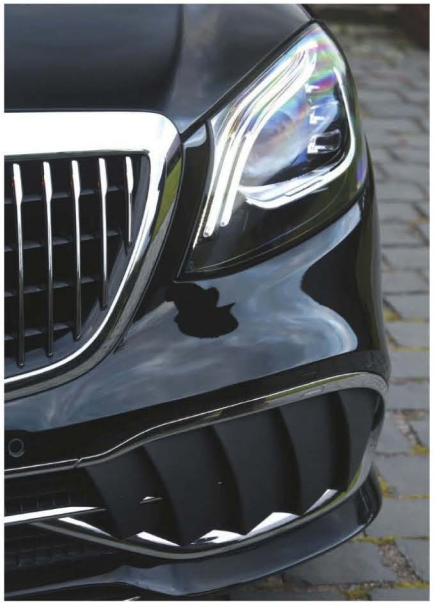
> *The implementation makes Rolfhartge the world's first tuner to place health at the heart of its customer mission*

"While it is true that learning to drive a high performance car well and safely is the best 'tuning' accessory for the owners of such cars, I have always believed that the driver and passengers of a luxury car, where the emphasis is on comfort and relaxation, will enjoy their journeys more if they are in peak mental and physical health," Rolf tells. "Health and well-being are the cornerstones of our new mission that focuses on smart innovations in design and a feel good atmosphere in the cabin. Couple this with subtle upgrades that enhance the appearance and comfort of the vehicle to create our Smart Luxury concept."

A unique offering that adds customer value over and above the pure driving experience, these Rolfhartge upgrades feature on the MR500 test car, based on a Mercedes-Maybach limousine. In this case, it's the bi-turbo V6 version that is popular in China for tax reasons.

The exterior styling changes are very subtle compared to ▷







◁ Subtle styling features aid the exterior look.

◁△ Larger wheels improves the car's handling.

△ Exterior styling has largely been left as intended.

▷ traditional body styling kits. Starting at the nose, angled slats for the front bumper air intakes give the car a distinctive frontal identity. At the rear, the changes are much more discrete and are limited to small vertical strakes under the valance. Ride quality and handling always benefits from lower unsprung weight, and here the 21-inch diameter Rolfhartge alloy wheels are made with a flow-forming process to optimise their strength to weight ratio. Shod with Pirelli P Zero tyres, each Rolfhartge wheel/tyre combination weighs around 3kg less than the comparable factory items. In engineering terms, the resulting 12kg reduction in rotating unsprung mass corresponds to an approximate 70kg reduction in total vehicle weight, with driving dynamics benefiting from the improved ability of the tyres to maintain full contact with the tarmac under hard acceleration, braking and cornering. Apart from enhanced primary safety, the reduced inclination of the wheels to patter over bumps also reduces tyre induced road noise: another plus point in the occupant comfort stakes.

CABIN MOVEMENT

The really ground breaking changes are in the cabin, which for many people is the third living space alongside home and office. The cabin of an S-Class or Mercedes-Maybach is already crafted from the highest quality leather, Alcantara and fine wood, and customers can leave this as is, or have the Rolfhartge team individualise it even more. But the real added value of the new Rolfhartge tuning philosophy is embodied in the innovative technologies installed here in the cabin, where a three-pronged attack on harmful elements is waged. The air purification system, liquid glass coating to reduce the harmful bacteria count and PSS Magnetic Field Therapy for rear seat passengers are all designed to leave occupants healthier and in a better state of well being.

According to official figures from WHO (World Health Organisation), around seven million people worldwide die from air pollution each year. To put this in perspective, that means five times more people die from breathing polluted air than are killed in road accidents (1.35 million). A similar ratio applies in Germany and the driver is one of the most exposed to nitric oxide, with the harmful ratio present at intersections or in tunnels often ten times greater than the permitted limit of 40ug/m³.

The exterior styling changes are very subtle compared to traditional body styling kits

To counter this, the Rolfhartge air filter system uses environmentally friendly photo catalysis to kill harmful microorganisms, germs, odours, vapours, and even capture solvent evaporation from interior plastics. In combination with the titanium dioxide-coated interior surface of the housing, a UV light tube is used to reduce nitric oxide emissions, a recognised air pollutant. Weighing 1,200gm, this near silent portable device is simply attached to a rear headrest and fed from any 12-volt power outlet in the cabin. It is particularly suitable for allergy sufferers, asthmatics and people with MSC (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity) syndrome. The optional AC/DC power supply ▷

▽ The name still has lots of past pedigree.



▷ allows this portable Air Purifier Car to also be used in small rooms at home, in the office, or in a hotel.

The interior of a vehicle is a breeding ground for pathogens invisible to the naked eye, with a particularly high concentration of germs found on steering wheels, gear shift knob, seats, other controls and floor mats. The innovative Nanopool (NP®) liquid glass technology that forms an ultra-thin, dirt and water repellent surface layer reduces the ability of bacteria and germs to adhere to surfaces. With no toxic substances in their composition, NP® products are skin and mucous membrane friendly and the look and feel of the treated material remains unchanged.

DIRT AND DEBRY

As dirt particles and debris cannot easily settle on a car interior treated with NP® technology, even white leather becomes a practical interior trim colour choice. Any stains are easily removed with warm water, and the coating is resistant to residual colour transfer from textiles, and even abrasion from jeans.

The PSS Magnetic Field Therapy machine that Rolfhartge builds into the rear seat potentially stimulates natural magnetic fields and helps them return to normal. Another first in an automobile application, this smartphone App controlled magnetic field system can encourage dilation of the occupants veins, "increasing blood circulation speed by up to two and half times normal", says Rolf Hartge, quoting the Institute for Microcirculation in Berlin. Increased blood circulation leads to a better supply of nutrients and oxygen to the body's organs and enhanced purification of the blood cells. The result is improved regeneration and increased wellbeing.

The implementation of these technologies in this unique approach to 'tuning' makes Rolfhartge the world's first aftermarket tuner to place health at the heart of its customer mission. This approach is especially appreciated by clients in China, which has a long tradition of health enhancing practices, such as magnetic therapy and acupuncture. Unsurprisingly, Rolfhartge made its debut in the Middle Kingdom first and is now negotiating with potential partners in Europe and elsewhere.



△ Rear filtration system can be customised.

The tuning philosophy is embodied in the innovative technologies installed in the cabin

Based on a Mercedes-Maybach, the Rolfhartge MR500 was officially unveiled in China at the CSITF (China Shanghai International Technology Fair) back in April.

Standing out from the high horsepower and 'Bling' normally associated with aftermarket tuning, the innovative Rolfhartge Smart Luxury concept clearly impressed the judges who were looking for fresh ideas amongst the 900 national and international exhibitors. Rolfhartge thus came away with awards for one of the '10 Most Popular Projects'.

With the car increasingly becoming the third habitat after home and workplace, it is logical to acknowledge health as the greatest wealth of all and tailor our moving living space around personal wellbeing. Given his history of innovative forward thinking it is no surprise that Rolf Hartge is once again at the tip of the spear. Welcome to a new age of tuning.

