

Dazzling base model in a gotta-have-it lineup

BY JOE SAGE

Mercedes-AMG continues to expand its offerings, adding this new base model to its four-door coupe GT lineup for 2021. Complexities present themselves immediately—on the one hand, from the relationship of the GT four-door lineup to the two-door GT roadster and coupe lineup; on the other hand from a degree of overlap with the Mercedes-Benz four-door coupe lineup; and on the third hand, among the GT four-door models themselves.

Setting aside any deeper GT discussion, suffice it to note that the GT four-doors have little in common with the two-doors beyond personality and a general penchant for performance.

We can also set aside the Benz-based models to a

pretty good degree, though you'll see in our chart (facing page) that it's hard to ignore them completely. The AMG CLS 53 in particular (based on Mercedes-Benz CLS, in turn based on E-Class) is in many ways a close contender to the AMG GT 53, at a lower price. (To reduce confusion, AMG CLS is currently 53-only.) Similarly, if looking to spend top dollar, you will likely find the AMG GT 63 S and the AMG S 63 Coupe a compelling comparo.

For our task at hand, the same chart gives a quick look at the most obvious stairsteps of price and performance for the formerly three, now four and soon to be five AMG GT four-doors. These are all the same size and come in the same elegant shape. Finish points and features vary up the chain

as you would expect, while even the base model delivers pure Mercedes-AMG luxury performance.

And that's the one we have here—the new AMG GT 43, slotting in just about \$10 grand lower than a GT 53 in a lineup that now almost doubles in price from the GT 43 at the bottom to the GT 63 S at the top overall.

You'll note the familiar AMG subset of biturbo V8s being AMG Hand Crafted wonders, while the turbo sixes for GT 53, 63 and 63 S are "AMG-enhanced" and also bear Mercedes-Benz EQ Boost systems for performance and fuel economy.

The price point for the new GT 43 brings a third engine build to the matrix—a 3.0L turbo six, just not the AMG-enhanced version. (Had the 43 been

MERCEDES-AMG GT 4-DOOR COUPES + TWO COUSINS

- All are 2021 prices; GT 63 S E Performance will be a 2023 model.
- 2023 GT 63 S E Performance information is European spec; US specs to be confirmed closer to model launch.

	ENGINE	HP	LB-FT	0-60 (SEC)	CITY/HWY MPG	
AMG GT 43 ▼	3.0L turbo I-6	362	369	4.8	20/25	\$89,900
AMG GT 53	3.0L turbo I-6	429	384	4.4	20/25	99,950
AMG GT 63	4.0L biturbo V8	577	590	3.3	16/21	140,600
AMG GT 63 S	4.0L biturbo V8	630	664	3.1	16/21	161,900
AMG GT 63 S E Performance	4.0L biturbo V8	831	1,033	2.9	tbd	tbd
<i>(compare)</i> AMG CLS 53	3.0L turbo I-6	429	384	4.3	21/26	81,550
<i>(compare)</i> AMG S 63 Coupe	4.0L biturbo V8	603	664	3.4	16/26	173,100

- 4.0L biturbo V8 engines are AMG Hand Crafted.
- Most 3.0L turbo inline-6 engines are AMG-enhanced with EQ Boost, except for the new GT 43 drive here, which is not AMG-enhanced but is mild hybrid.
- All have AMG Speedshift® 9-speed TCT or MCT automatic.
- All have AMG Performance 4MATIC+ all-wheel drive.

in the lineup first, the 53 would boast being tuned for higher performance; with the 53 having come first, the distinction is quietly the inverse.)

All those variables may make choosing among them sound easy, or perhaps just the opposite. It's a case study in why we have choices—just when you think one is obvious, there's another that may be moreso, whether higher or lower in the pecking

order. The best news is that however heavily you sweat the decision, you will leave the dealership with years of blissful performance in your hands, and that certainly includes leaving with the title to a new AMG GT 43.

Let's hop in.

We first noticed that, unlike most recent Mercedes-Benz vehicles with gears operated by a right-

(cont'd)



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Sindelfingen, Germany
ENGINE/TRANSMISSION	Germany
BUILD	steel unibody, aluminum and steel outer sheet metal
ENGINE	3.0L inline-6 DOHC 24v turbo w EQ Boost mild hybrid drive, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE	362 hp / 369 lb-ft
+ EQ BOOST	up to 21 hp
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1
REDLINE	6800 rpm
DRIVETRAIN	AMG Performance 4MATIC+ variable all-wheel drive
TRANSMISSION	AMG Speedshift TCT 9-spd w wheel-mounted paddles
ZERO-TO-60	(est) 4.8 sec
TOP SPEED	(elec lim) 168 mph
SUSPENSION	F: indep multi-link w coil, single-tube shock w continuously adjustable damping, solid torsion bar; R: indep multi-link w coil, single-tube shock w continuously adjustable damping, tubular torsion bar
STEERING	speed-dependent electro-mechanical rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 14.2/1.4; R: 14.2/1.0
WHEELS	F: 19x9.5; R: 19x11
TIRES	F: 255/45R19; R: 285/40R19 Michelin 4S summer performance
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	199.2 / 116.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	41.3 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	tba / tba in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.7 / 35.5 in
CARGO CAPACITY	12.7 cu.ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	tba
WEIGHT	4530 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	21.1 gal
MPG	20/25/22 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$89,900
BRILLIANT BLUE METALLIC	720
INTERIOR: Auburn Brown and Black exclusive Nappa leather	2850
AIR BALANCE FRAGRANCE / ION PKG	350
21" AMG FORGED WHEELS: cross-spoke w grey accents	3450
MBUX AUGMENTED VIDEO	350
AMG PERFORMANCE EXHAUST	1850
AMG DRIVE UNIT STRG WHL BUTTONS	400
HEATED/VENTED FRONT SEATS	450
FIXED PANORAMA ROOF	2100
SURROUND-VIEW CAMERA	500
AMG LIGHT DISPLAY	250
BLACK DINAMICA HEADLINER	1600
MBUX INTERIOR ASSISTANT	200
USB-C ADAPTER CABLE	25
DRIVER ASSISTANCE PKG: active Distronic distance, steering, lane change, emergency stop, speed limit, brake (w cross-traffic function), evasive steering, lane keeping and blind spot assist; Pre-Safe Plus rear collision protect; route-based speed adapt	1950
DESTINATION CHARGE	1050
TOTAL	\$107,995



hand stalk behind the wheel, the shifter in this is in a more conventional spot on the console, though it's more of a dynamic joystick than a traditional lever, giving it more of a trackpad feel.

Drive modes are plentiful, including a customizable individualized setting. Console storage is generous, including cavernous multi-use cupholders.

The interior bears numerous high-end satin silver metal parts and surfaces, including controls—stylish, but on a 110-degree day here, just flat-out too hot to touch, even in the shade. You need to either cool the cabin down or, since the outside door handles have the same issue, do as we did all week, bring along a pair of thin leather gloves.

Behind the wheel, we immediately knew we had something special in our hands. This may be the smallest powerplant in the family, but 4.8 seconds to 60 mph is exhilarating and impressive anywhere short of the dragstrip. It's certainly plenty around town, zipping responsively from block to block, even in default comfort mode. Rip-roarin' up a freeway ramp, you may ask yourself what you could even do with all those other horses, though you'll get a hint from our chart, with acceleration times just above three seconds for the GT 63 S or just under for the upcoming 63 S E Performance.

Trust the Germans to come up with exactly the right sound for any powertrain, and this all-wheel-drive six is no exception, eschewing artificial big

engine effects popular with some brands, rather delivering a satisfying genuine sound and feel.

We did try the GT 43 in sport and sport plus, and fancied that to be somewhat like going from the GT 43 to the 53 to the 63. You can do the same in the 53, 63 and 63 S, of course, so it's for you to decide where your satisfaction levels lie.

We're performance freaks with the best of 'em, but we recall that when the SL roadsters offered a 12-cylinder, we appreciated the V8 for its weight distribution and handling. The AMG GT four-doors are all 4MATIC or 4MATIC+ all-wheel-drivers, but the inline-six versions offer a similar comparative.

Mercedes recently vowed to thin out its lineup, knowing full well they just may have too many for many customers to put their heads around (or for most dealers to inventory). But if you were a product planner, which would you get rid of? None of them, of course, and that in a nutshell is why the GT four-door lineup is broad and growing broader. (See our sidebar, as it grows by yet another.)

If you didn't know the others existed, the GT 43 would suitably blow you away and satisfy your soul. As you do know they exist, go look at them at your own peril—you can no doubt successively fall in love with each one. But in the back of your head, you'll remember this one was pretty incredible itself, and it's the least expensive of the four.

Owning the least expensive unit in the lineup could make some people feel they're coming up short. Forget that. Just as easily, it can leave you feeling like the smartest kid in the class. ■

MEET GT 63 S E PERFORMANCE

For those who just have to have the highest of the high end—or are just curious—meet the Mercedes-AMG GT 63 S E Performance, recently announced for the European market. The first performance hybrid from AMG enters series production drawing upon technologies from Formula 1. The combination of an AMG 4.0-liter V8 biturbo engine and electric motor generates a system output of 831 hp and a maximum system torque above 1,033 lb-ft (per European specs). The distinctive drive layout features an electric motor and battery on the rear axle, along with a high-performance battery developed in-house, a formula promising immediate response at the rear axle and rapid torque build-up from the electric drive, along with improved weight distribution, engineered to deliver superior performance and maximum efficiency for a new, highly dynamic driving experience. As in Formula 1, the battery is specifically designed for fast power delivery and draw. A fully electric range of about seven miles allows a useful operating radius in the urban or residential areas. The car is due in the US for model year 2023.

