Quick on its feet and quick to recharge

by Joe Sage

We flew to Colorado in September for a multi-vehicle Mercedes-EQ and Mercedes-AMG EV deep dive (see NovDec 2022). Included were two drive sessions in the 2023 Mercedes-EQ EQS SUV, one on a challenging paved Foothills route, the other an extreme off-road course farther into the Rockies. In November, one of those same machines came to spend a week with us here in Arizona, this one the 450+, the base model of three ranging from $104,400 to $129,950. (An AMG is expected to join the lineup. With the EQS Sedan as reference, this may run around $150,000.)

The EQS SUV is the first new-platform EQ SUV to market (the prior EQB SUV is an adaptation) and the largest. It follows the 2022 EQS Sedan, which we had driven last winter here (see our JanFeb 2022 issue) and drove again in Colorado this fall.

Advanced cabin luxuries include Energizing Comfort sound effects, HEPA air filtration, a full-width MBUX Hyperscreen with features for both driver and passenger, haptic-touch feedback and personalized suggestions in the driver interface.

Performance and handling of the EQS SUV are enhanced by standard 10-degree rear-axle steering, great for parking or mountain twisties, and proven on our Colorado off-road course, where it maneuvered like a fraction of its size.

Our schedule this time would be challenging—race weekend at Phoenix Raceway would mean multiple round-trips between opposing far corners of the Valley. We'd be doing a lot of math, as well as the usual searching for the best available and functional chargers, always an adventure, but unfamiliar areas added a new dimension.

Our 450+ is the only rear-drive EQS SUV model and (with just one axle driven) the least powerful, at 355 hp and 419 lb-ft of torque. (The 450 4MATIC, with two axles driven, has the same horsepower but brings torque to 590 lb-ft, while the high-output 580 4MATIC delivers 536 hp and 633 lb-ft.) Charge times and capacities are the same for all. Range is 305 miles for RWD (or 285 for 4MATICs).

The base model's power and torque are still a massive kick in the pants and, as with any EV, on tap from the first instant your toe hits the pedal. Nonetheless, 4MATIC is only three grand more, so we'd almost surely opt for that, despite the trade-off of 20 miles less range, which could be the difference between making it to the next charge or not, based on many of our prior adventures.

It's a bigger power and price jump up to a 580 4MATIC, but the numbers speak for themselves.

We're big fans of performance all-wheel drive, though its purposes are in some ways increasingly mitigated by stability technologies. Our week included some horrendous rainstorms—with nary a care about lack of 4MATIC, as our rear-drive 450+ handled anything and everything flawlessly.

We didn't note charge level at first, but after delivery miles, plus an errand or two, and one trip to the track, we had 58 percent charge remaining, suggesting our next trip out there could leave us cutting things quite tight. We investigated options in unfamiliar areas, expended some juice searching a few out but finding them to be private, fairly quickly deciding we'd be better off using what we're used to near home—if we made it.

We tried eco mode, in pursuit of additional re-

generation and/or preservation, but it was too gutless for our taste. Regardless of going back to normal mode, however, we somehow consumed only 30 miles of range in our second Phoenix Raceway roundtrip (about 100 miles). We were either cruising highly efficiently, regenerating more than we may have thought, or both, or just lucky.

We hit a familiar DC fast charge station just as the sun was setting (better than our usual low-demand midnight-to-dawn sessions). Best of all, Mercedes is as good as its word on charge times. This is rated at just 31 minutes from 10 to 80 percent, though we went from near-zero to near-100, still unmistakably faster than our other recent EVs.

The fact remains, overall, that you are going to want your own fast-as-possible home charger if you're buying an EV. The other fact remains, however, that sometimes you just won't be at home, even on a busy metro-spanning local weekend like the one we had with this vehicle.

All in all, our take is the same as it was from our Denver launch event—if Tesla has had the luxury EV market sewn up for awhile with luxury mostly defined simply by the fact they're pricey, they are going to have to make room. The new EVs from Mercedes-EQ are about to take a huge bite out of this market, and rightly so. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY ..... Tuscaloosa, Alabama
ELECTRIC MOTOR(S) ..... permanently excited synchronous, 265 kW rear axle only; (450 4MATIC 265 kW combined dual axles; 580 4MATIC 400 kW combined dual axles)
HP/TORQUE ..... 355 hp / 419 lb-ft
..... (or 4MATICs 536 hp / 633 lb-ft)
BATTERY PACK ..... Lithium ion
RANGE ..... 305 miles (or 4MATICs 285)
CHARGING TIME ..... (all models)
240V/32A wallbox (10-100%) 11.25 hrs
110kW DC Fast Charging (10-80%) 31 min
0-TO 60 MPH ..... 6.5 sec (others 5.8, 4.5 sec)
TOP SPEED ..... (all models) 130 mph
DRIVETRAIN ..... RWD; (others avail fully-variable 4MATIC AWD w Torque Shift)
STEERING ..... 10º rear-axle steering standard
TURNING CIRCLE ..... under 36 ft
LENGTH / WHEELBASE ..... 201.8 / 126.4 in
WEIGHT ..... TBA
FUEL ECONOMY ..... TBA

2023 EQS SUV LINEUP

EQS 450+ SUV $104,400
EQS 450 4MATIC SUV 107,400
EQS 580 4MATIC SUV 125,950
AMG EQS SUV ..... (no word so far)

Wheels well toward the corners and minimal overhangs front and rear create exceptionally stable handling and the basis for the EQS SUV's substantially spacious passenger and cargo volume.