

# An F1-derived AMG SL in sedan clothing

All the power and tech we feared might be fading away have instead received special attention BY JOE SAGE

This is a 2023 model C-Class, currently still on the lots, but all does remain the same for 2024 (aside from one big announcement—see sidebar).

Going into 2023, the Mercedes-Benz and Mercedes-AMG C-Class Coupe and Cabriolet, as well as the non-AMG Mercedes-Benz Sedan, were unchanged. The Mercedes-AMG C 43 Sedan driven here, however, has had quite a lot to talk about.

The engine is a tale of numbers small and big. At just two liters and four cylinders, this unit delivers 402 horsepower—boosted for short bursts to 415 via Mercedes' 48-volt mild hybrid system (which also feeds a belt-driven starter-generator). This is a bit more than either a V8 or V12 Mercedes-Benz SL performance coupe from a decade or more back, and a bit less than an

AMG V8 or V12 of that same vintage. But again, this is a two-liter four—which incidentally is rated in upper-mid 20s for highway fuel mileage.

You'll note we've invoked the SL in this tale of the C-Class, and there's a reason—so does Mercedes. In fact, the technology chain starts even higher than SL, as the AMG team had already invoked the C-Class, and there's a reason—so does Mercedes. In fact, the technology chain starts even higher than SL, as the AMG team had already invoked the C-Class, and there's a reason—so does Mercedes. In fact, the technology chain starts even higher than SL, as the AMG team had already invoked the C-Class, and there's a reason—so does Mercedes.

The C 43 Sedan's hand-built AMG M 139I engine is proclaimed to be the first series production unit in the world to feature an electric exhaust-gas turbocharger, a technology taken directly from the AMG Petronas F1 Team, first applied exclusively to "63" models. Its transmission is an AMG Speed-

shift MCT 9G 9-speed automatic with wet start-off clutch and a Race Start function. Its Performance 4MATIC permanent all-wheel drive is rear-biased, and the system is further enhanced by AMG Ride Control suspension with adaptive damping, also adding standard 2.5-degree rear-axle steering.

The interior features all-new AMG Performance seats in a variety of materials, colors and trims (ours is in rich Sienna brown over black leather).

And all of this starts at just under \$60 grand, though ours adds a long list of options and packages, including 20-inch AMG wheels (see sidebar), taking it into the mid-70s.

We had our C 43 for a very wet week, the kind of weather we welcome when equipped with that 4MATIC all-wheel drive. Around town, we noted the value of its power when needed on the free-

ways or in tightly defined shifts on surface streets (with shifts sometimes more noticeable than expected until you get used to it). All of that was without using modes, as we tend to value out-of-the-box setup as our initial foundation for perceptions (and philosophically for long term).

We had fun taking special note of a boy racer in a Detroit pony car, for some reason hunting us down and rip-roaring around us in town. Subtle AMG badging aside, we looked quite ordinary versus, say, our car's blood cousin the AMG SL. But we stayed cool, content knowing we had 400-plus horses—the sleeper factor, advantage: sedan.

Power, traction and precision control were begging for some open road, so we obliged. With rain still pouring down, we headed up the four-lane Beeline Highway, then onto the aggressive dips and curves of two-lane Bush Highway.

The drive was fantastic, and we could easily have continued for two thousand miles, wet or dry. (With an almost 20-gallon tank—another advantage: sedan—and that healthy highway fuel mileage, we would not have to stop often, either.) We couldn't do that, that week. But you can. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....East London, South Africa
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	.....Germany / Germany
PARTS CONTENT	.....S.Africa 49% / Ger 30%
ENGINE	.....AMG M139I handcrafted longitudinal 2.0L 4-cyl w electric exhaust-gas turbocharger, two-stage injection
ON-BOARD ELECTRICAL	.....48V
HP/TORQUE	.....402 hp / 369 lb-ft w brief 48V electric boosts to 415 hp
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10:1
TRANSMISSION	.....AMG Speedshift MCT 9G multi-clutch 9-spd auto, wet start-off clutch, wheel-mounted shift paddles
0-TO-60	.....4.6 sec
TOP SPEED	.....elect lim 155 mph (165 mph w optional 19- or 20-in wheels)
DRIVETRAIN	.....AMG Performance 4MATIC w rear-biased torque distrib (F/R 31/69%)
MODES	.....AMG Dynamic Select programs: slippery, comfort, sport, sport+, indiv
SUSPENSION	.....F/R: AMG Ride Control susp w alum dbl wishbones, anti-squat/anti-dive control, lightweight coils, stblzr bar, Adaptive Damping System. F: special dev steering knuckles & suspension joints on spring control arm; R: elastokinematics for driving dynamics
STEERING	.....three-stage AMG parameter; standard 2.5° active rear-axle steering
BRAKES	.....F: 370x36mm vented-perfed, 4-piston fixed calipers; R: 320x24mm, 1-piston floating caliper
WHEELS	.....staggered 20-in AMG split 10-spoke
TIRES	.....F: 245/35 ZR20 / R: 265/30 ZR20
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....188.6 / 112.8 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....(est) 3.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....39.3 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....40.0 / 37.5 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.7 / 36.0 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....16.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....4092 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....prem unl / 17.4 gal
MPG	.....19/26/22 (city/hwy/comb)

<b>BASE PRICE (2023)</b>	<b>\$59,900</b>
PAINT: Manufaktur Moonlight White Met.	1750
INTERIOR: Sienna Brown/Black leather	1620
WHEELS: 20-in AMG split 10-spoke	1450
PANO ROOF	1000
4-ZONE AUTO CLIMATE CONTROL	860
ADVANCED USB PKG	300
ENHANCED AMBIENT LIGHTING	250
INDUCTIVE WIRELESS CHG	200
DRIVER ASST PKG: active distance DISTRONIC, active steering asst, lane change asst, lane keep asst, PRE-SAFE PLUS, blind spot asst, brake asst w cross-traffic, evasive steering asst, emergency stop asst, speed limit asst, route-based speed adaptation	1700
DIGITAL LIGHT PKG: digital light headlamps w projection function	1100
MULTIMEDIA PKG: MB nav w augmented video, heads-up display	1700
SOUND PKG: Burmester 3D surround sound, on-line streaming, sound personalization	650
DESTINATION CHARGE	1150
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$73,630</b>
<i>2023 model, as also still listed on consumer site.</i>	

## AMG C 43 SEDAN LINEUP (2023)

AMG C 43 Premium Sedan	▼ \$59,900
AMG C 43 Pinnacle Sedan	* 62,700
<i>*Our Monroney and base price are for Premium, though all options that differentiate Pinnacle trim level are on ours, without it bearing that name.</i>	



## FULL C-CLASS LINEUP (2023)

C 300 / C 300 4MATIC Sedan	\$44,850 / 46,850
AMG C 43 Sedan	▼ 59,900
C 300 / C 300 4MATIC Coupe	49,550 / 51,550
AMG C 43 Coupe	62,600
AMG C 63 S Coupe	81,500
C 300 / C 300 4MATIC Cabriolet	57,250 / 59,250
AMG C 43 Cabriolet	69,250
AMG C 63 S Cabriolet	90,000

## AMG C63 S E PERFORMANCE SEDAN COMING SOON (2024 MODEL)

The new AMG C 63 S E Performance brings state-of-the-art technologies derived directly from Formula 1 to the road. A two-speed electric motor on the rear axle supports the most powerful production four-cylinder in the world, a handcrafted AMG front-mounted longitudinal 2.0-liter turbo. Power delivery and torque buildup are spontaneous, without delay. As in Formula 1, electric support of the exhaust gas turbocharger eliminates turbo lag of the combustion engine, while the rear axle electric motor pushes powerfully from a standstill. The electric powertrain and 400-volt high-performance battery are AMG exclusive in-house developments. As in Formula 1, the battery is specifically designed for fast power output and draw, with innovative direct cooling of the cells. Combined system output is 671 hp and 752 lb-ft of torque, new benchmarks for C-Class.

Styling of the new AMG C 63 S E Performance sedan more muscular proportions than the standard C-Class, based on an extensively modified AMG bodyshell. The front end is 2 inches longer and 3 inches wider, with wider front fenders accommodating a wider track. The wheelbase grows by 0.4 inches, overall length by 3.3 inches. An exclusive feature new to the C 63 S is a narrow air outlet in the center of the hood, transitioning into the two power domes. And for the first time ever on a production Mercedes-AMG model, a round badge with a black AMG emblem replaces the Mercedes star with laurel wreath on the hood.

Details of pricing and availability will follow. ■

