

Transition afoot

BY JOE SAGE

Mercedes has announced a complete change-over to EVs, half by 2025 and all by 2030, closing in on us fast. For now, the E-Class Sedan—a model with us since 1994—soldiers on in two trims, while there are three EQE EV sedans. The only AMG E-Class Sedan is an EV. For an AMG gasoline sedan, the only model now is the C-Class.

Further simplifying the lineup—or isolating the sedan—for the sixth generation, the longstanding E-Class Coupe and Cabriolet models have moved to a new CLE class, also covering the prior C-Class Coupe and Cabriolet, following suit to the CLA.

The E 350 4MATIC bears the lower of two pow-

ertrains, its Pinnacle level now an option package rather than a separate trim. Built in Germany with a 255-horsepower 2.0-liter turbo-four, it now adds Mercedes-Benz's 48V mild hybrid system, enhancing both power and fuel economy, together good for zero-to-60 in 6.1 seconds, with 33 MPG highway. A \$62,300 base price hits the executive-luxury slot well, though ours was almost \$84,000 out the door. The formula is solid, with its turbo-four delivering about two-thirds the power and twice the fuel mileage of a typical performance V8 from 15 years ago, along with a healthy soundtrack.

Just \$5,800 more is the E 450 4MATIC Sedan, 375 horsepower from a 3.0-liter inline-6 turbo, also with 48V mild hybrid and 4MATIC, for zero-to-60 in 4.4 seconds with fuel mileage dropping just two points. If you were to trade off our E 350's Pinnacle Package (\$3,400 on either) for the power of an E 450

without Pinnacle, the price gap is just \$2,400. We could be enticed by the E 450's 47 percent higher horsepower at just nine percent more cost (or just 3.6 percent if dropping Pinnacle from the 450). But while we could live without such touches as Active Ambient Lighting with Sound Visualization, the Pinnacle package does include Burmester 4D Surround Sound, and that's pretty much a must.

Driving is generally as potent and pleasant as expected, given fairly traditional power to weight. At first, steering felt lighter and livelier in lane changes than we might expect from a rear-based all-wheel-driver. But if you opt for AIRMATIC suspension, as on ours, then rear-axle steering is also added. Mercedes has been implementing this increasingly, a benefit, it seems, of its addition to the big EVs with long battery-accommodating wheelbases. This system has two tricks. At speeds up to

37 mph, the rear wheels turn up to 4.5 degrees opposite the front—describing a circle—for tighter parking (or U-turns at lower speeds). But above 37 mph, they angle the other way, in the same direction as the fronts—describing four parallel lines—up to 2.5 degrees. This may well be what felt different to us at first, but in fact provides unusually sure-footed lane changes. (No turning circle specification is yet given, perhaps itself variable.)

Light restyling this year adds a black surround tying together the grille and headlights. Increases are boasted for headroom and legroom (not yet specified), as well its near-20-cubic-foot trunk. To us, the driver's seat had fairly tight range, and our elbow frequently popped open the clamshell console bin lid. You'll want to try it on for size.

While some Mercedes models currently have separate metal switches for controls (seats, mirrors, items on the wheel) we're increasingly seeing the black plasticky membrane-covered multiple switches this has, which we find can trigger a

neighboring function. (Examples include trying to nudge a side mirror, but instead folding them in traffic, or trying to set seat-mirror memory and instead invoking old settings and wiping out your efforts, or turning on heated seats without realizing.)

Five years or less of life left before all-EVs may seem plenty, but it feels different when they are the last years. We found ourselves contemplating how much of gen-six brings breakthroughs versus bearing a role as a stop-gap placeholder.

Put it all together, and it's an interesting time to shop. From mild styling updates to significant EV development bonuses like that four-wheel steering, details may be carrying across from past, future or sibling vehicles simply as available, as the commitment to gasoline models grows faint.

They're not alone on this. And you may find it motivating—grab while you still can. On the other hand, the EV revolution is currently hitting measurable resistance. It will be interesting to see how changes progress in this lineup in coming years. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....	Sindelfingen, Germany
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD.....	Poland / Germany
PARTS CONTENT.....	Germany 35% / US/Can 0%
ENGINE.....	2.0L inline-4 turbo
+MILD HYBRID.....	48-volt system, integrated starter/generator, up to 23 hp / 148 lb-ft
HP/TORQUE.....	255 hp / 295 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION.....	9G-TRONIC 9-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN.....	4MATIC AWD
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED.....	6.1 sec / 130 mph (lim)
SUSPENSION.....	optional AIRMATIC w air springs, adaptive ADS+ dampers, sensors set according to quality of road
STEERING.....	rear-axle: below 37 mph up to 4.5° against front angle when parking; above 37 mph up to 2.5° same dir as front
BRAKES.....	(no specs)
WHEELS.....	8.0x8 five-spoke
TIRES.....	225/55R18 a/s ext mobility
LENGTH / WHEELBASE.....	194.9 / 116.6 in
GROUND CLEARANCE.....	(no specs)
TURNING CIRCLE.....	(no specs)
HEADROOM (F/R).....	tba / tba in
LEGROOM (F/R).....	41.5 / tba in
CARGO CAPACITY.....	19.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT.....	4189 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY.....	prem unl / 17.4 gal
MPG.....	24/33/27 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE.....	\$62,300
PINNACLE TRIM.....	3,400
PAINT: Manufaktur Alpine Grey.....	1,750
WHEELS: 21-in AMG multispoke w black accents.....	3,050
INTERIOR: Tonka Brown Nappa leather.....	2,990
CONSOLE: Silver Metallic mixed fabric.....	150
(CREDIT): missing garage door opener.....	(280)
MBUX SUPERSCREEN PKG.....	1,500
DRIVER ASSISTANCE PKG.....	1,950
DIGITAL LIGHT PKG.....	990
WINTER PKG.....	450
LEATHER PKG.....	800
AIRMATIC SUSPENSION PKG.....	3,200
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	1,150
TOTAL.....	\$83,400

2024 E-CLASS LINEUP

.....	AWD	
E 350 4MATIC Sedan.....	\$62,300	
E 350 Pinnacle Trim.....	65,700	▼
E 450 4MATIC Sedan.....	68,100	
E 450 Pinnacle Trim.....	71,500	

2024 EQE / AMG EQE LINEUP

.....	RWD	AWD
EQE Sedan.....	74,900	77,900-85,900
AMG EQE Sedan.....		106,900

