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Behind the Scenes: Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG

A wolf in sheep's clothing — it'll be by you before you know it

By **Kim Wolfkill**
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When it comes to producing their high-output specialty engines, Mercedes-Benz's performance arm, AMG has a simple approach: One man, one engine. No automated assembly line, no crowd of mechanics working on the same engine. Each individual unit is hand assembled by a single dedicated engineer who works on it from beginning to end. Whether it's AMG's supercharged V-8 or its latest direct-injection turbocharged 5-cylinder diesel, each engine receives the same level of attention from its particular builder.

Similar focus is also applied to the chassis, body and interior enhancements that make up every AMG model, culminating in cars like the new [2004 E55 AMG](#) profiled in the January 2003 issue — on newsstands now. With its supercharged V-8 pumping out 476 bhp and 516 lb.-ft. of torque, this latest AMG model raises the bar in the ultra-competitive sport sedan segment.

Enjoy this closer look at the staggeringly fast E55 AMG, plus some shots of the fleet and fascinating (though unavailable in the U.S.) C30 CDI sport coupe. See what makes these specially tuned machines so appealing and so hard to catch.

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The Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG may look like a standard E500, but under its subtly modified bodywork lies a sport-tuned chassis, enormous brakes and a supercharged V-8 engine.



With 5.5 liters of supercharged displacement, the E55's smooth-revving V-8 engine produces an impressive 476 bhp and a staggering 516 lb.-ft. of torque.



Sportier cockpit touches include an AMG-specific instrument cluster and sport steering wheel with fingertip controls of the Speedshift 5-speed automatic transmission.



Enhancing the high-performance nature of the E55 interior are special nappa/nubuk leather sport seats with the AMG logo, which are available in three different color combinations.



Performance is more like a sports car than luxury sport sedan. Preliminary manufacturer claims are 0-60 mph in 4.5 sec. and an electronically-limited top speed of 155 mph.



Chassis modifications include AMG-tuned Airmatic DC semi-active suspension, high performance brakes (8-piston front, 4-piston rear) and lightweight 18-in. twin-spoke alloy wheels.



On the road, there are few equals for the E55's combination of high performance and stealthy appearance. Extreme acceleration, braking and handling is handled nearly effortlessly.



Likely the view all but the fastest sports cars will ever see of a speeding E55 AMG. With the class or a luxury sedan and the speed of a sports car, it's truly a wolf in sheep's clothing.



Not sold in the U.S., but worthy of attention is this surprisingly versatile iteration of the C-Class sports coupe, the C30 CDI. Underhood is a 3.0-liter inline-5-cylinder turbo-diesel.



With similar suspension, brake and interior enhancements as the U.S.-market C32 AMG sedan, the C30 CDI delivers sure-footed performance in a sporty, compact package.



Not your typical diesel, the C30 CDI's engine puts out an amazing 231 bhp and 398 lb.-ft. of torque. 0-60 mph takes just 6.8 seconds with a top speed of 155 mph.



Mercedes-Benz offers high performance AMG models of nearly every class of automobile it builds. Everything from roadsters, coupes and sedans to wagons and sport utes.



AMG originally established itself through international sports car racing where it has competed successfully for 35 years. Here are five of its most accomplished race cars.

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