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Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG

Absolute power corrupts absolutely

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Like its high-horsepower *über-* sedan counterparts — the BMW M5, Audi RS 6 and Jaguar S-Type R — the latest-generation Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG represents the fastest, most capable and highest-performing 4-door in the company's lineup. And now, thanks to its 5.5-liter supercharged V-8, the E55 jumps to the head of the class in the battle for top horsepower honors. The title no longer belongs to the vaunted M5 (395 bhp) or even the hot new RS 6 (450 bhp), as the E55 bests them both with a whopping 476 bhp and 516 lb.-ft. of torque.

To achieve these giant-killing numbers, AMG engineers rely on two proven approaches to building powerful engines: forced induction and large displacement. An intercooled Lysholm-type supercharger serves up a healthy dose of horsepower, while buckets of torque come courtesy of the engine's 5.5 liters of displacement. Combining this with specially engineered pistons, rods, camshafts, crankshaft, cylinder heads and a high-flow exhaust system produces a ferociously powerful, yet exceptionally smooth engine. Stand on the throttle and acceleration is both instantaneous and unrelenting. The E55 immediately leaps forward with a burst of thrust that makes the factory's 0-60-mph time of 4.5 seconds feel a touch conservative.

New From AMG

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Using the new E-Class platform as its starting point, AMG makes improvements by optimizing vital drivetrain,

suspension and braking components to complement the engine's prodigious power. Shifting is handled by a SpeedShift 5-speed automatic transmission with steering-wheel controls and adaptive logic programming. With the same transmission that's used in the SL55, shifts are smooth and quick in automatic mode, and when operated manually, it delivers an experience that is surprisingly close in operation to that of a paddle-shifted manual transmission.

The Airmatic DC semiactive suspension is also modified for high-performance duty with lower air-volume spring struts, revised shock settings, a 10-mm-lower ride height and stiffer anti-roll bars. Settings for the electronic suspension control, including ESP, have also been modified for more demanding driving. The result is less body roll, quicker steering response and greater high-speed stability than the already excellent E500, with no detrimental effect on ride quality.



Braking performance matches the E55's appetite for speed as stopping duties are tackled by massive 8-piston calipers/14.2-in. vented rotors up front and 4-piston calipers/13.0-in. rotors in back. This racing-derived hardware never fails to effortlessly slow the big sedan no matter what the speed or circumstance. Assisting these mechanical components is Sensotronic Brake Control (SBC), which lends the E55 an enhanced feeling of security under hard deceleration and panic stops.



Like all AMG models, interior and exterior enhancements are subtle, but functional. A racier nose, side skirt and tail treatment is accompanied by attractive split-spoke 18-in. alloy wheels and four large exhaust pipes that hint at the E55's more aggressive nature without drawing unnecessary attention. Interior touches include AMG sport seats with Nappa/nubuck leather upholstery, an AMG-specific instrument cluster and the aforementioned steering wheel with manual gearshift controls.

So what will it cost to enjoy near-Porsche Turbo performance in a stylish 4-door package? North American prices won't be announced for several months, but expect the new E55 to hit showrooms in April 2003 as a 2004 model priced somewhere in the neighborhood of \$75,000.

If that's the case, finding one in a showroom may be almost as tough as catching up to one on the open road.

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