

ROCKIN' THE BOAT

BY JOE SAGE

EQ is the new Mercedes-Benz EV lineup, being presented as a Mercedes-EQ sub-brand, the same approach taken with Mercedes-AMG and Mercedes-Maybach in recent years. (It's a bit ironic to us after years of pointedly using the full Mercedes-Benz name, rarely just Mercedes. But now add a hyphen, and they're all official.)

The new lineup is defining itself by starting at the top in the US, with an S model (letters follow suit to the Mercedes-Benz lineup, at least so far). This large luxury cruiser is the first to be built upon a new all-electric modular platform, this one to

also be used for an executive-class (E) model. The overall goal is to have a completely carbon-neutral lineup within 20 years, with half of those by 2030.

There is some redundancy in an individual vehicle name. Rather than an S 580 with a full name of Mercedes-EQ S 580 (following suit to a Mercedes-AMG S 65, for example), this is an EQS 580, thus a Mercedes-EQ EQS 580. We may see some more evolution on this before all is said and done.

This rockin' super-high-tech big luxury yacht is sure to rock the boat in the industry overall, where it may be fair to say luxury has been defined to

date purely by a high price. While entries in the entire EV marketplace are growing exponentially, Mercedes-EQ heads straight to the high ground.

Despite the parallel naming, the EQS is immediately recognizable by its own distinct wind-swallowing profile, or "one-bow cab forward design." They have totally nailed the styling, telegraphing exactly what it is: a big luxury electric Mercedes.

Inside, a single combined instrument and touchscreen panel—the MBUX Hyperscreen—sweeps the full 56-inch width. (Beneath the visually dominant single glass panel live three conventionally

rectangular OLED screens.) Instruments include the latest generation of MBUX with augmented reality navigation. Actuators and pressure sensors provide haptic-reminiscent touch.

The cabin is full of beyond-the-norm creature comforts—"health and wellness" features that seem tailor-made for an autonomous cocoon, but are intended to boost real live drivers' attentiveness and reduce behind-the-wheel stress. These include forest, ocean and rain background sounds (fed through a Burmester 3D sound system) and an "energizing" filtered air supply. Programs involved are said to "intelligently combine comfort and vehicle functions," which suggests many possibilities for driver and/or vehicle tech intervention.

The headrests bear billowy pillows, very comfortable for a passenger, though sometimes somewhat in the way for a driver.

Many controls—seats and mirrors on the door, others on the steering wheel—are set under multi-switch smooth membranes, slick, but harder to use without looking and, in our experience, sometimes making it harder to pinpoint a selection.

All in all, this layout makes everybody else's rectangle-in-the-center-stack seem quite dated. Any existing high-dollar EV maker is going to have a run for its money with this in the marketplace.

All that said, and as with anything, the proof is when you punch the pedal. Now, this isn't the only EV we've driven, and much of the experience is fairly universal among them. Then again, even the universal aspects are clearly overlaid with Mercedes' technical grace and this model's 516-horsepower equivalent and 631 lb-ft of torque.

Within a block, we had noted that this car could make it hard to go back to internal combustion.

(cont'd)



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Sindelfingen, Germany
LAYOUT	.....four-door five-passenger sedan
MOTOR	.....dual permanently synchronous
OUTPUT	.....385 kW
BATTERY	.....lithium-ion hard case 216 cells
ON-BOARD CHARGER	.....9.6 kW
RANGE	.....350 miles
CHARGE TIME:	
240V/32A (10-100%)	.....11.25 hrs
DC Fast Charge 110kW (10-80%)	.....31 min
HP/TORQUE	.....516 hp / 631 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	.....4MATIC all-wheel drive w Torque Vectoring
TRANSMISSION	.....single stage
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	.....4.1 sec / 130 mph
SUSPENSION ..F/R:	AIRMATIC Air Suspension
STEERING	.....electro-mech speed dependent rack & pinion; 10-degree rear-axle steering
BRAKES	.....F: 15.35"; R: 14.88"
WHEELS	.....22-in 5-twin spoke, black accents (standard: 9.5x21 cast)
TIRES	.....22-in range-optimized summer (standard: 265/40 R21)
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....207.28 / 126.38 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....5.28 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....35.76 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....40.35 / tba in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.7 / tba in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....22 / 63 cu.ft.
WEIGHT	.....5888 lb
MPGe	.....91/98/94 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$119,110
PAINT, UPHOLSTERY, TRIM	
Graphite Grey Metallic	
Neva Grey / Sable Brown leather	
Natural grain Anthracite Linden wood	
Neva Grey headliner	.....nc
CABLE: emergency use 110v charging	.....250
AIR BALANCE PKG	.....350
ENERGIZ. AIR CONTROL PLUS, HEPA filter	.....450
TIRES: range-optimized, summer	.....nc
WHEELS: 22" 5-twin spoke, black accents	.....1350
HEATED STEERING WHEEL	.....250
HEADS-UP DISPLAY	.....1100
GLASS: laminated safety, infrared protect.	.....1010
ACTIVE AMBIENT LIGHTING	.....590
RAPID HEATING FRONT SEATS	.....450
EXCLUSIVE TRIM: front multicontour seats with massage, four-zone climate control	.....1575
CREDIT: x- standard valet/beginner mode	.....(50)
CREDIT: x- standard AMG Line exterior	.....(2200)
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1050
TOTAL	.....\$125,285

2022 MERCEDES-EQ EQS LINEUP

EQS 450+ Sedan	
Premium	.....\$102,310
Exclusive	.....105,710
Pinnacle	.....108,510
EQS 580 4MATIC Sedan	
Premium	.....▼ \$119,110
Exclusive	.....122,510
Pinnacle	.....125,310





We contemplated our fundamental desire to be able to hop in and go anywhere, any time and any distance, and how that might fare against EV range. As it turns out, we would have a way to compare this as the week wore on.

As we are often inclined to do, we popped the car into sport mode. A rough response crossing a rain trough inspired us to change that—we went into the custom profile and gave ourselves sport driving and steering, but comfort suspension, then never thought about it again.

Downsides included that regenerative drive-train feeling of no gradation in the pedals between full stop and full go—it takes some getting used to, to not be able to eeeease into motion as we're all familiar with, even on a nanosecond scale, and get more of a feel for a vehicle's heft and power.

Other downsides had to do with charging challenges, surprising in our EV-rich neck of the woods, but that's another more general EV factor. A full-time owner will probably have their own charger at home, and they'll be more familiar with options for top-offs in the region. We do drive EVs regularly and have all the apps and accounts, but due to various technical issues and inoperable stations, we felt as though we spent as much time charging (or trying to charge) as driving.

Things that did impact our drive as the week went on, that were specific to this car, all came down to the interface. We had a running list of key settings that had turned themselves on or off—from a disappearing heads-up display, to seat preferences, to audio—an hour digging for this, an hour digging for that—for which we never found corrections or mitigations (even if we had earlier). But each item that felt as though it was beyond our own control was disquieting. Imagine a home with controls you could not predict, but that an engineer had intended to be intuitive. We've been

there, in hotels, where just turning the lights all on or off would take a week or two of training and learning, not one hotel night. As features themselves, they can surely sooner or later be solved—but many seemed too clever for their own good. Try as many as you can, and see what you think.

Just a couple of days into our time with the EQS, it turns out we had to run to California, just to pick up an obscure but very necessary computer part that someone would not ship. Fifteen hours of drive, 90 seconds of “hi and thanks.” We had a prohibition against taking the electric Mercedes out of state, so we would take a car of our own—which gives us the partly EVs-in-general and partly this-one-in-particular perspectives at right.

But it sheds light on the real world ownership experience, subject to variables of lifestyle and experience—as with our charging experience.

We had started the week with high praise for the design and interface of the car's instruments and features. That wore off pretty quickly, as we did repeated dives into the system, trying and often failing to find or correct many key functions.

Thus it's too bad we couldn't drive this to LA, for that reason in particular. Perhaps moreso than average, this vehicle experience would benefit from a longer cruise like that, with a co-pilot in the right seat, digging through the manuals and screens for the loose ends and sometimes overly complex mysteries we were tallying. Once all are solved, the pure driving experience should come through loud and clear—and that is magnificent, indeed.

Next on tap for the Mercedes-EQ lineup are the aforementioned EQE sedan and an EQB SUV, both already revealed for other markets. And the Mercedes-Benz C, E, S, B and-so-on naming convention is set aside with a VISION EQXX being revealed in early January. The future is here. ■

OUR UNPLANNED EV-IC COMPARO

With a necessary dash to greater LA and back on our hands, but not allowed to take the EQS out of state, we spent most of two days instead in our own gasoline V8 sport coupe. That's okay. There are long stretches between things on I-10 west, and we wouldn't have to stop to charge an EV. Hitting gas pumps right is tricky enough.

But as we cruised, we got to thinking and to running the numbers, for gasoline-vs-EV, or for our-car-vs-the-EQS more specifically.

The EQS 580 has a stated range of 350 miles, healthy for the big three-ton vehicle it is, but there are a lot of EVs coming out now, even big pickups and SUVs, stating 500.

In most efficient 6th gear (manual), our relatively thirsty V8 read between 18-21 mpg on this run. Its tank is about 17 gallons. We had left with about 5/8 of a tank and refilled at more like 12 or 13 gallons, grabbing gas stations where they exist on a long stretch like that. We stopped three times total, round trip—Blythe, Pasadena and Quartzsite on the return. Seventeen gallons at 20 mpg gives the car 340 miles of range, about the same as the EQS. Realistically, a driver will run neither a gasoline vehicle nor an EV to the end of its range. On either, 70-80 percent of range is about 240-280 miles. Figure we would have stopped just as often to charge the EQS, same-same, three times.

However, each charge takes about an hour, compared with a few minutes to fill the tank. That adds three hours to our roughly 17.5-hour drive time.

And around town, an EV owner may have the charging ritual down pat. But on a longer drive, it may take any of us another hour to locate chargers in unfamiliar places, more if we have to wait for someone who's already charging. We may encounter chargers that are out of service or otherwise failing, as we did here. Another hour for all that, times three, now adds six hours to the trip in total.

Our trip had one overnight. Adding three hours for charging, or six or more with hunting and waiting, would add a hotel night.

Much of this is general EV thinking, and it's all on a fast track to improvement, though these numbers are specific to the EQS. All in all, this partly theoretical but basically dead-on comparison seems useful to note today. ■

