



E55 Press Conference/Chicago Auto Show

Dave Schembri and Jean Alesi

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Intro Video

(Then, introduction by Scott Keogh.)

Scott:

Good afternoon, and thanks for joining us today as we unveil the next great supercar from Mercedes-AMG, the 2004 E55. Mercedes-Benz invented the four-door supercar, and the new E55 shows that nobody's done it better than Mercedes-AMG.

Dave Schembri, Executive Vice President, Marketing for Mercedes-Benz USA is here to introduce the car and talk about the AMG product strategy. Dave ...

Dave:

Thank you Scott.

Introducing a new AMG model is probably the most fun part of my job. We've been introducing a lot of AMG models recently, so I'm having a lot of fun.

Almost as much as I like talking about horsepower, I enjoy reporting sales figures. For Mercedes, both numbers keep going up. 2002 was our best year ever in the US, with 231,225 units sold. And we just finished our best January ever with 15,650 sales.

The all-new E-Class, which we introduced last fall, sold 4,513 in January. It's always been one of our most important models, in the U.S. and around the world.

Here are some more impressive numbers: Mercedes-Benz USA has doubled its sales volume over the last six years. We've tripled it in the last nine. We're not just selling more vehicles than ever, but more kinds of vehicles. Many of you remember when Mercedes was a four-car company – three sedans and the SL roadster. Today, we've got nine model lines – three sedans, two coupes, two roadsters and two SUVs -- plus the fun C-Class Sport Coupe.

In the past year alone, we've introduced 10 new products. That's more than we introduced in the entire 1970s. We're not about to slow down. We've got the pedal to the floor on the product pipeline.

Last year, Mercedes-AMG sold 18,700 cars and SUVs worldwide – more than 6,500 of those in this market - in a transition year for four of our key AMG models. That's a long way from the zero AMG cars we sold here in 1994 and the 192 we sold in 1998. A chart of the AMG sales history for the U.S. market looks like the acceleration curve for one of our AMG cars – nearly straight up.

The competition has taken notice, and now it seems that everybody is starting a division to market high-performance vehicles.

But building a true high-performance car for today's market takes a lot more than jacking up the horsepower, putting on some fat tires and spoilers and picking a letter from the alphabet to name it. We welcome the competition, but I have to tell you, it's good to be king.

We've made AMG a cornerstone of our product strategy, operating it as a brand within a brand. We will continue to offer an AMG vehicle in every model class. That gives us the largest, most powerful lineup of high-performance cars and SUVs in the market today.

Every AMG vehicle combines Mercedes-Benz safety and quality with ultra-high performance – but without making special demands on the driver. It means high-performance you can enjoy every day.

That formula goes back to 1967, when AMG started as an independent developer and racecar builder – just for Mercedes cars. AMG spent three decades building a fiercely loyal international client base, and then DaimlerChrysler bought majority ownership in 1999.

Those three letters have a lot of history and horsepower behind them. Mercedes cars were pretty conservative in 1967 -- too conservative for Hans Werner Aufrecht his partner Erhard Melcher. That's the "A" and the "M."

They left Mercedes to build racecars and set up shop in the small town of Grossasbach – that was the "G." They were proud to put their initials on the car, and we still are today.

About the time AMG got started, Mercedes invented the world's first four-door supercar – the 300SEL 6.3. It was our biggest V8 from the 600 limousine in a lighter body.

The 6.3 was the fastest sedan in the world – and AMG made it even faster. They took it racing – and won.

Our next four-door supercar came along in the late 1970s, the 450SEL 6.9. The legendary 500E followed in 1993. Mercedes invented the four-door supercar, but AMG perfected it. They built their own

version of the 500E called the Hammer. Mercedes customers in America read about it and began asking our dealers about AMG.

So, in 1995, Mercedes teamed up with AMG for our first joint project, the C36 – yet another four-door supercar. It came to America with the full backing of the Mercedes factory warranty. We knew AMG engineering and quality were that good. The founders were originally Mercedes engineers, after all.

The response was overwhelming. We only brought in about 250 a year for three years – and that was not enough. So we replaced the C36 with an even more powerful model – the C43 with a 300-plus horsepower V8 engine.

More four-door supercars followed. The first E55 arrived in 1999 with a 349-horsepower 5.5-liter V8. We put that engine in the S55 AMG for 2001 and then did a supercharged V6 in the C32 AMG for 2002.

Along the way, we added AMG versions of the SLK, CLK, CL, our two SUVs and the new SL.

We're not waiting for competition to catch up. This year, AMG introduced a supercharged 493-horsepower version of the 5.5-liter V8 in the mighty S55. Now this new AMG engine powers our new-generation E-Class to create the next Mercedes four-door supercar – the E55 AMG.

As I mentioned, AMG has always raced what it built. In Germany, AMG has been a dominating force in DTM racing – that's the German Touring Car series. DTM races production-based coupes and sedans, all with V8 engines.

AMG has taken first place in seven of the last 11 years. That's quite a record, and it's what you need to do to build authentic high-performance cars. So, I thought it might be fitting to invite a special guest to help give the new E55 a proper introduction.

Jean Alesi is one of our two AMG factory drivers. Jean is a 10-year veteran of Formula One racing who took 4th place at his debut race – the French Grand Prix – in 1989. Jean, thank you for being with us today.

(Jean stands up by the covered DTM car.)

(Dave walks down to join Alesi at the covered car on the floor.)

Dave:

Jean, you've become quite familiar with AMG high-performance machines. Please, tell us what makes this AMG model so exceptional.

Alesi:

Dave, I like to talk about five key points that AMG builds into all its racecars and road cars.

First, every single AMG model gets a hand-built engine. There's a special crankshaft, pistons, camshafts, cylinder heads ... you name it. The exhaust system is also a special AMG design.

Second, AMG cars have multi-piston racing brakes with huge ventilated and cross-drilled rotors: 8-piston in front and 4-piston in the back for the new E55.

Third, AMG designs special aerodynamic fascias and side skirts to produce zero lift. They're not just for looks. AMG validates the body in the wind tunnel.

Fourth is an AMG adjustable suspension to optimize handling at all speeds.

And fifth, there's an AMG-modified transmission to get all that power to the road efficiently.

Dave:

It goes fast, stops safely and handles like a sports car – all with Mercedes luxury, quality and safety. I think it's time we showed the car.

(Reveal the CLK DTM car)

Alesi:

This is my car Dave -- the CLK that I drive in the DTM racing series. It's got a 430-horsepower V8. So ... what did you bring?

Dave:

Come with me.

(Dave and Jean walk back to the stage.)

Dave:

Jean, my AMG car has everything that you mentioned – the handbuilt engine, special exhaust, special aerodynamics, wheels and brakes ...

And Jean, I hate to break this to you ... but my car has more power than yours.

(Cue sound of engine starting, clamshell opens to reveal E55)

469 horsepower to be exact – with an astounding 516 lb.-ft. of torque. That's 115 horsepower more than our first E55. The new E55 can do zero-to-60 in just 4.5 seconds.

The big increase in power comes from a Lysohm supercharger with 11.6 PSI of boost and a crossflow intercooler.

I should point out that Mercedes designed the new E-Class from the start to handle this level of performance. The suspension in my new E55 is the three-stage Airmatic system that automatically adjusts to road conditions.

My E55 has the electronic Braking System – it's unique to Mercedes-Benz. Plus, my car has anti-lock brakes and the Electronic Stability Program for maximum safety in all kinds of driving. Those are both Mercedes inventions.

The transmission is an ultra-quick five-speed automatic with AMG SpeedShift programming. I can shift manually from the steering wheel controls if I want.

Alesi:

I'm jealous, Dave.

Dave:

You should be. But wait, there's more.

Jean, your car only has room for one. I can take four friends in my car, and we sit in luxurious nappa / nubuk leather seats.

(Optional: Three models come out and get into the E55.)

That's the beauty of a four-door supercar. The best part is that the E55 cost a lot less than your one-seat racecar. The new Mercedes-AMG E55 has a suggested retail price of \$76,000, and it's available in May.

Jean, if you want one, you'd better hurry – we're only offering a limited number per year.

Alesi:

Will you take an autographed helmet as a down payment?

Dave:

We can talk about it in the car.

(Dave and Jean get into the E55 – Jean in the driver's seat.)

(Scott Keogh comes back up to close the session.)