

Speaks for itself

BY JOE SAGE

The more Mercedes-Benz simplifies their extensive lineup in some ways, the more complex it can seem to get in others.

It's almost hard to recall now, and seems longer, but there has been much evolution. Their SUVs started pretty simply, with just the ML in the late 1990s. (There was always the G-Wagen, too, though that has remained in kind of an orbit all its own.) Then came the big three-row GL, in the mid-first decade of this century, followed by a much smaller sibling, the GLK (as a smaller GL of sorts, its name following the SL and SLK roadsters' pattern).

All became much clearer around the mid-

dle of our prior decade—2015 or so, which now seems so long ago and the lineup so well established—as all were renamed slightly and became a family as the lineup expanded, following suit to the familiar sedan classes, as S Class, E Class and C Class begat the GLS, GLE and GLC SUVs.

The GL or GLS has long been a favorite of ours, while the GLC has also caught our eye, even when tastes ran higher up the line by size. While GLE had quite a different style and feel from the big GL, GLC followed suit as more of a downsized version of GLE, perhaps even better proportioned.

The current C-Class SUVs, the GLC lineup, are pretty simple, at least those in the US market. While there can be Benz, AMG and even Maybach versions of many products in the lineup, plus now EV equivalents of many, and regular two-box and Coupe versions of

SUVs, for C-Class there are simply two standard two-box and one Coupe Mercedes-Benz SUVs and one AMG Coupe SUV. There is no EV in C-size for now. In fact, the only difference between the two Benz two-box SUVs is that one is rear-wheel-drive, the other with the same engine but 4MATIC all-wheel-drive.

Ours driven here is the rear-drive standard two-box Benz—not 4MATIC, not a Coupe, not an AMG—and, as such, the base unit in the entire GLC family. This brings to light one of its key attributes—this Mercedes-Benz luxury utility is priced in just the upper-mid \$40s (ours, heavily optioned, reaches the mid-\$50s). It's already looking like a great buy at this point, simply based on badge and price, in a lineup that runs to just under \$70,000 base, for its one current AMG Coupe version in the US.

However, the lineup is also continuing to evolve even as we study it. (It's already easy

to find conflicting info, among corporate and consumer materials and third-party sources, partly because of European versus US versus universal sources, partly because the (SUV) Coupe version is sometimes included with tallies of the (two-box) SUV and sometimes not—and it's all affected by rapid development in general and for multiple huge key global markets, notably Europe, China and the US.

Just days before this issue's final deadline, Mercedes corporate emailed us news of an AMG GLC 63 S E Performance Hybrid SUV joining the group (with it not completely clear whether this is a European-only model, at least immediately). This relatively fuel-economical 680-horsepower super-utility will start at about \$131,700 (equivalent).

Our week with the new generation-two GLC produced few specific notes, which we take as a plus, confirming that, as noted in the headline, this vehicle—from features, to fit and finishes, to performance and handling, to styling and stance—largely speaks for itself.

Much is new for 2023, however—a new digital instrument panel and central touchscreen (derived from the flagship S-Class, as are other interior design and materials points), with more powerful processing, advanced voice control and video navigation; a small bump in dimensions with big benefits in legroom and cargo capacity; a more powerful engine with EQ Boost standard in all GLC 300 trims; a “transparent hood” camera feature available on the 4MATIC; and various new paint, interior and wheel options.

We're suckers for 4MATIC, for AMG builds, even for the Coupe version, although less efficient with interior volume, but in Mercedes' case one of the most stylishly executed.

All that said, this base unit is exactly what you expect it to be, and generous in all regards, even before considering its highly competitive pricing. This in itself is refreshing in turbulent evolutionary times. There's a lot to be said for just delivering on high expectations while still keeping it simple. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....	Bremen, Germany
ENGINE/TRANSMISSION ..	Germany / Germany
CONTENT.....	75% Germany / 0% US/Canada
ENGINE	2.0L inline-4 turbo with EQ Boost 48V mild hybrid system
HP/TORQUE	255 hp / 295 lb-ft
+EQ BOOST	up to +23 hp / +148 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1
TRANSMISSION	9G-Tronic 9-sp auto
DRIVETRAIN	RWD (4MATIC model avail)
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	6.2 sec / 130 mph
SUSPENSION.....	F: four-link steel w selective damping system; R: indep multilink w selective damping system
STEERING	speed-dep electromech direct rack & pinion
BRAKES	F/R: internally vented disc
WHEELS	19-in multispoke
TIRES.....	235/55R19 Michelin Primacy AS
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	185.7 / 113.1 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	TBA
TURNING CIRCLE	38.7 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	41.3 / 39.65 in
LEGROOM (F/R).....	40.7 / 37.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	21.9 / TBA cu.ft
WEIGHT	4167 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY.....	.91 octane prem unl / TBA
MPG	25/32/28 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$47,100
DASH: MB-Tex w Nappa look.....	350
PANORAMA ROOF	1500
SIRIUS XM w 6-mo trial	350
WHEELS: 19-in multispoke	600
DRIVER ASSISTANCE PKG: Active assist: Distronic distance, steering, lane change, lane keep, Pre-Safe Plus, blind spot, active brake assist w cross-traffic, evasive steering assist, emergency stop assist, speed limit, route-based speed adapt	1950
EXCLUSIVE TRIM: surround view system, Guard 360°, Burmester surround sound, illum door sills, enhanced ambient lighting, MB navigation	2250
DESTINATION CHARGE	1150
TOTAL	\$55,250

2023 GLC SUV LINEUP

GLC 300 SUV	255 hp	▼ \$47,100
GLC 300 4MATIC SUV	255 hp	49,100
AMG GLC 63 S E Performance Hybrid SUV ..	(just released in Europe) .680 hp	±131,770

And related but currently broken out separately:

2023 GLC COUPE (SUV) LINEUP

GLC 300 4MATIC Coupe ..	255 hp	54,700
AMG GLC 43 Coupe	385 hp	68,200

Our only nitpick, worthy of just passing mention: a current interior design point, already encountered in other models, uses smooth black rubbery plastic membranes—some of which are touch and slide, others of which conceal pushbuttons, itself confusing—to in some cases combine multiple functions. Accordingly, we have found it unexpectedly difficult to, for example, set seat positions into memory without turning on the heated seats, which share the same membrane.