

# Mercedes-Benz flagship coupe gets a grip with the CL 550 4matic

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VIENNA: For the first time, Mercedes-Benz is adding its 4Matic all-wheel-drive to the CL family of large, premium luxury coupes.

The 4Matic system will be available only on the CL 550 4Matic starting around August.

The CL was launched in 2006 and also includes the CL 500, CL 600, CL 63 AMG and CL 65 AMG. The rear-wheel-drive CL 550 will no longer be offered.

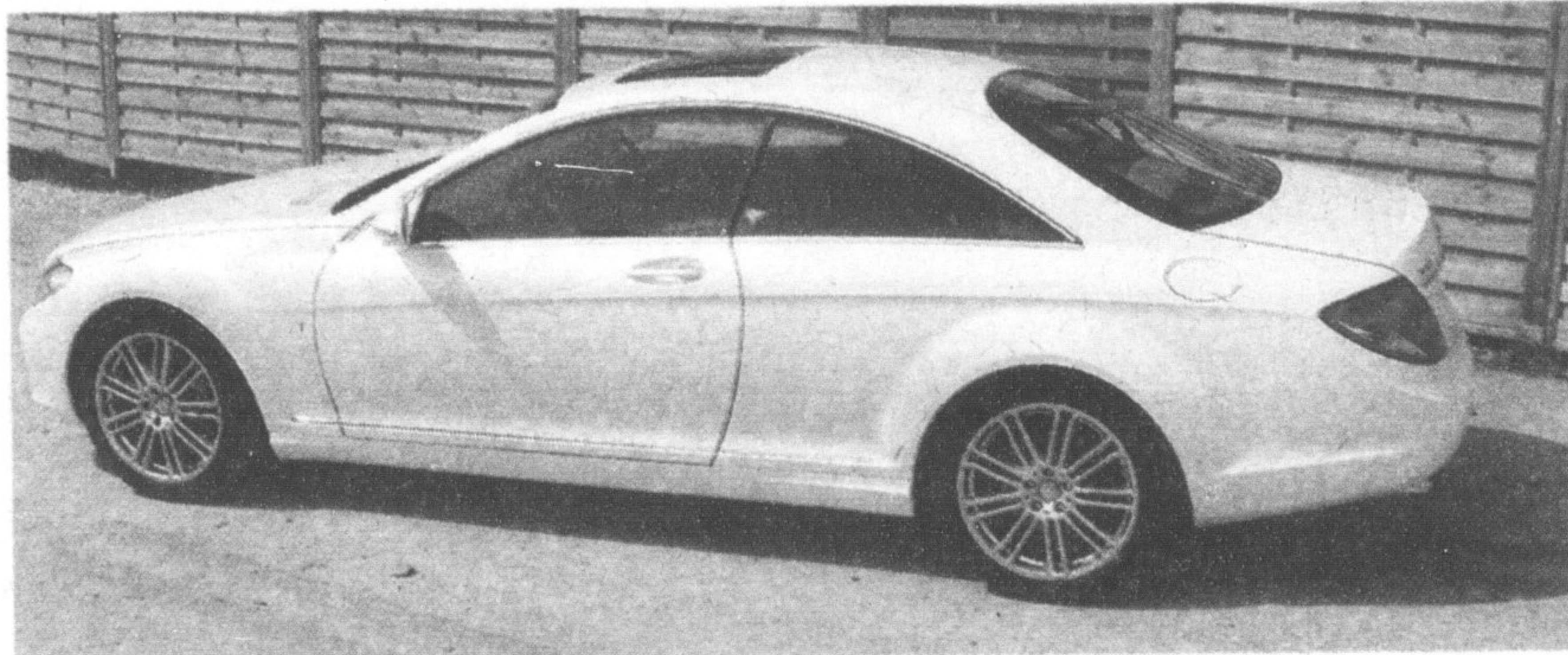
Already proven in the topline S Class, 4Matic is engaged permanently with the result the driver doesn't have to worry about response times. With this knowledge, the driver can deal with adverse road and/or weather conditions without having to switch to all-wheel-drive.

The system is centred on a transfer case with a central differential that's also mated to the standard seven-speed 7G-Tronic automatic transmission with torque being split 45 front, 55 rear. Inside the central differential is a twin-plate clutch that locks up the front and rear axles starting when torque starts to exceed 50 Nm (39 lb/ft). This then allows torque to be further split between the two axles based on where grip can be most effective.

The whole system only adds 70 kgs to the weight of the car.

The 4Matic system is further combined with the Electronic Stability Program (ESP) and Mercedes' 4ETRS traction control system. This system further brakes the wheels that are spinning while routing torque to the wheels with the best grip.

The CL 550 4Matic is powered by a 5.5-litre, DOHC V8 producing 388 hp and 398 lb/ft of torque that is available from 2,800 to 4,800 rpm. Fuel consumption on the European combined loop is 12.1L/100 km. Canadian fuel numbers had not been released at this writing.



The classic lines of Mercedes-Benz' flagship coupe, the CL, now gets 4Matic all-wheel-drive exclusively on the 2009 CL 550 as shown.

With the extra traction provided by 4Matic, the big coupe goes from 0-100 km in 5.4 seconds with a top speed limited to 250 km/h.

The active suspension system that controls damping on the four-wheel independent setup has been upgraded for 2009 to the Airmatic DC air suspension system that uses sensors to provide instantaneous and almost infinite

response to road conditions.

Based on the flagship S-Class, the coupe versions of the same have always been highly prized by owners but not produced in large numbers. At the press launch of the 4Matic CL in Austria, Mercedes had a sampling of S-Class coupes on display. Richly trimmed and equipped, the previous generations of the

coupe contained the heritage DNA that was so evident in the new CL 550 4Matic.

The list of standard equipment includes electric trunk closure, Parktronic with rear view backup camera, Linguatronic voice control, Thermotronic climate control, active (swivelling) Bi-Xenon headlights, heated windshield washer system and the TeleAid emergency Calling system.

There are the extras included as standard, like auto dimming driver's side and rearview mirrors, a little first aid kit and gorgeous burl walnut trim (matte finish optional) that makes the whole interior somehow feel more warm and personal.

With the roads all clear, dry and well maintained there was no way to put the 4Matic system to the test, but I can tell you the big 5.5-litre V8 needs little prodding to get up to speed.

Even with the relaxed speed limits, exceeding them was far too easy to do.

With the current 2008 CL 550 priced to start at \$135,000, you can expect the 2009 with 4Matic to be about the same or, I was told, slightly less.

## Hyundai continues to provide dependable motoring

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blurs the difference between mid- and full-size.

I drove both the Limited V6 with sport package and the GL with automatic that will probably be the volume seller.

The V6 is very punchy with nice engine torque/gear spacing on the automatic. Suspension on the Sonata is double wishbones at the front and a multi-link independent set up at the rear. MacStruts would have been simpler and less costly, but Hyundai knows the wishbones give a more solid feel yet are more

communicative.

I put most of my miles on the V6 on a variety of roads in and around the Town of Erin with its pristine streets and houses and large presence of OPP. On gravel roads, the sport suspension with its stiffer springs and stout stabilizer bars didn't take the ruts and washboard surface that kindly. On a normal highway surface I could feel the difference in tautness and response compared to the normal suspension of the 2.4-litre.

By the same token, the 2.4-litre was much more forgiving on the same gravel stretch but did not react as fast as the V6 with sport pack-

age.

The 2.4-litre also gets up to speed nicely but nothing like the V6 that feels larger in displacement than it is. However, the 2.4-litre with its great mileage makes it the smart choice based on the rising cost of fuel.

The answer there, of course, is the 2.4-litre with the sport package to get the handling and fuel economy at the same time.

Either way, the 2009 Sonata continues to do what Hyundai does best and that's provide dependable motoring with a surprising list of features at a price that leaves the competition gasping.



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