

Comfort and elegance combined

By Hezeri Samsuri

WHEN one talks about buying a Mercedes-Benz, chances are he or she is referring to the E-Class.

The E-Class is the bread and butter model for the brand in many countries, and in Malaysia, the E 200 K is very popular.

Comfort is one of its traits, and elegance is another of its strong points.

But what will it look like when you add a touch of sportiness to it?

Mercedes-Benz Malaysia (MBM) did just that – it came out with the E 200 K Sports Edition, a move that raised many eyebrows even among its own top management.

You see, the E 200 K is the entry level model in the E-Class, the first Mercedes-Benz to many new towkays. These are the traditional car buyers who will normally frown at any wheel larger than 16-inch.

The gamble seems to pay off as dealers have snapped up every available unit of this out-going W211 model. We even think that it is a smart move as this model might even woo some younger buyers who think BMW is too ostentious.

From the outside, the black paint job highlights the bigger 18-inch alloys (previous E 200 K comes in 16-inch wheels). Not only are the wheels bigger, the tyres are staggered too (the rear now sits on a tyre as wide as 265 mm).

Peek through the 10 twin spoke wheels and you can spot the perforated front brake discs with silver painted callipers that have the Mercedes-Benz logo on each of them.

The car also sits lower than the normal version, thanks to the sports suspension. The rear gets dual stain-



Bigger wheels and lowered ride height certainly help bring out the sporty side of the E 200 K.

less steel tailpipes, jutting out aggressively from each corner.

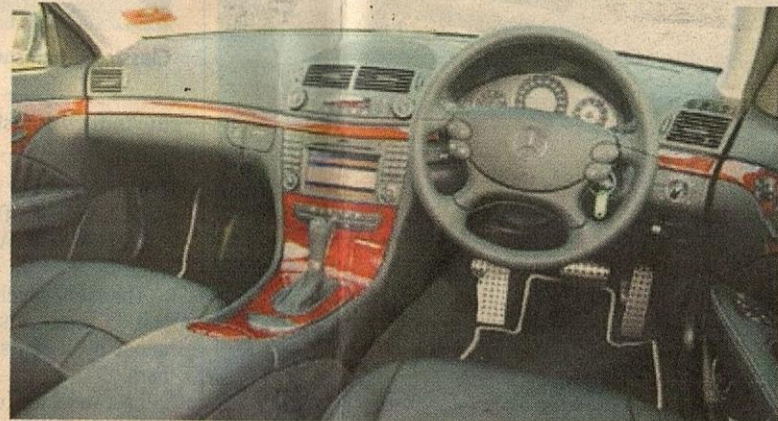
MBM has also thrown in a lot of goodies previously available only in the higher variant of the E-Class.

One of them is the Intelligent Light System, headlamps which can adapt to suit the ambient condition.

With five settings, the computer chooses which one suits the surroundings. For example, on an empty country road, the system throws more light to the side and extra 10-metre vision range so that the driver can look further to the side (for animals perhaps) and down the road.

The system also includes cornering light function and a smarter fog light that cuts through fog better without too much back glare.

The loudest yahoo goes to the black interior, a refreshing change from the boring grey tones of the previous ver-



Classier looking dashboard, thanks to the new colour scheme.

gnise our pronunciation but the Linguatronic has a self-learning function to familiarise itself with our lingo.

Comfort level is also updated with

now gives a taut ride, but never harsh. Body roll is still there but better controlled. It seems the sports suspension is not as sporty as we expected,

SPECIFICATIONS

Mercedes-Benz E 200 K Sports Edition

Engine: 4 in-line, 16-valve, 1,796cc supercharged

Max power: 184hp @ 5,500rpm

Max torque: 250Nm @ 2,800-5,500rpm

Transmission: 5-speed auto with sports paddles

Safety features: ABS, BAS, airbags, ESP, Pre-Safe

Recommended tyre



ContiSportContact 3

Front Fitment: 245/40ZR18 FR

Rear Fitment: 265/35ZR18 XL FR

Continental

www.continental-tyres.com.my

tion. The black on black with wood inserts in the Sports package gives a better image.

For the Sports Edition, the sports seats offer aesthetic looks as well as ensuring that your bums don't go sideways while executing sharp bends.

MBM has also thrown in some electronic gizmos to add more value to the E 200 K.

For starters, the model now comes with Comand APS, which means you get the hard disk based navigation system with DVD player and a 6.5-inch colour display.

To make control of all the functions easier and safer, MBM is also giving the Linguatronic system. This is one system we can say works well. Many other voice control systems fail to rec-

ommendable 4-zone climate control. Four quadrant solar sensors calculate the angle of the sun's ray at the four seats and adjusts the air volume and temperature.

The engine remains the same – the familiar 1,769cc 4-inline unit that uses a supercharger to gain 184hp and 250Nm.

Transmission is a five-speed auto, with Sports paddle shifts to manually shift the ratios.

Mercedes-Benz claims that the 1.8-litre Kompressor engine gets this big sedan going from nought to 100km/h in 9.4 seconds, while top speed is 232km/h. Unbelievable figures for such a small engine, and it still has one more surprise – fuel consumption is a paltry 8.5 litres per 100km. Sounds perfect, right?

Not really though. The suspension



We like the twin stainless steel tailpipes and wide rear tyres.

but that is acceptable as the car still needs to focus more on comfort.

Push it really hard and the front end will give way before the electronics grabs it back and throws in its safety net. There is no way you can break the rear wheel traction just by using engine power.

Speaking of the engine, that powerplant needs to haul around a body that has a gross weight of 2,105kg. On paper, it gives sterling performance but in reality, laud-back driving is the preferred choice.

Step the accelerator and the car requires a few seconds to summon all the energy it has to turn the rear wheels.

Don't get us wrong, it can be done but you have to understand the limitations.

Driving it like a big limo, the car is a perfect everyday vehicle. Step into it and all your sufferings are left outside the car, leaving you feeling fresh. We can drive all day long in this car and still come out smiling.

Fuel consumption wise, we know the low figures Mercedes-Benz claimed can be achieved if you are on a highway. Around town, the car gulps a reasonable 11.5 litres/100km. With a 65-litre tank, it will take some time between fill ups.

The price tag remains RM353,888, same as the old E 200 K. It is always worthwhile to shop around when buying a Mercedes-Benz but this E 200 K is a steal no matter where you buy it.