

On Test **Mercedes E 250 CDI Coupe**



Photos by Martin Galea

So very nearly perfect

HUGH ARNETT

A few months ago I thoroughly enjoyed the latest E Class saloon, so I accepted a drive in the exciting new E Class Coupé with the alacrity of a perennial motor head on a super 'high'.

This two-door pillarless beauty is at the top end of the saloon range. The lack of the 'B' pillars allows for fully retractable side windows, which makes the comfort levels inside on decent days more reminiscent of a true sports car, with the difference that the roof is a permanent feature rather than a lump of possibly destructible canvas.

Once the full beauty of the front, back and sides has been thoroughly digested, and the size of the luggage compartment has been sensibly appreciated, one slides on board and finds that the Coupé has four wonderfully sculptured seats, properly designed for complete comfort and safety. The high backrests have an easy-entry function to allow the rear seat passengers to leap in and out with ease, and at the sort of speed that does not make following drivers fearful of unexpectedly long delays.

Behind the wheel, having adjusted the driving seat to suit, and manoeuvred the steering up and down, forwards and backwards, what simply remains is to start the engine, select a gear, in this case Drive, adjust the mirrors, signal the intention to move and release the foot operated handbrake.

And then, if the road is clear, it is fun to accelerate away as fast as this 204 bhp diesel will allow. It climbs so far beyond our local maximum speed that even the faster traffic police would never see anything but the rear end and light clusters if the Mercedes driver was

driving in true 'sporting' mode. Believe me, the colossal amount of torque available is pretty darn good.

A total of 500 Nm of pulling power developed at a miserly 1600-2400 rpm allows the car to be driven and enjoyed most thoroughly flat out for all of 6.2 seconds before our maximum speed limit is reached. Then it becomes a matter of coming off the throttle pedal for a bit until engine revs have dropped to hold the car steady at 80 km/h. In fact, she blasts up to 100 km/h in only 7.2 seconds (5.4 seconds in the E-500 petrol version) and peaks at a pretty respectable 249 km/h.

All this speed and power is absolutely academic in Malta where the diesel barely ticks over at 80 km/h and is totally inaudible at 60 km/h. But for all motoring enthusiasts who have a few euros after the government has pruned salaries to the bone, this is a superbly

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engineered, marvellously comfortable, safe and exhilarating vehicle to own and drive.

Frankly, I always assume that this type of vehicle is owned by the sort of people who will think little or nothing about ploughing off abroad on a really long motoring experience. I'm sure they will drive the car most properly and safely here in Malta, reading road conditions to judge speed, exactly as they would do in EU countries that have no fear of speed, trusting their driving population to be in control of themselves and their cars at all times.

Like many modern super cars, this Coupé is totally tractable pottering around our disgustingly surfaced village streets. It is equally at home on the dreaded school run, where it adds a certain élan for any lady wishing to appear feminine yet motherly while driving a properly engineered package, rather than a very large and totally inappropriate 4x4.

The Coupé has up-to-the-minute safety features including belts and airbags and it would take a pretty moronic type of driver to 'overcook' things within our legal speed parameters, unless he/she was so old or so inexperienced that distances and actual road conditions were simply not noticed.

Even so, at the sort of speed that most people think is safe over here, the various electronic aids and superb suspension found in the E Class will make it very difficult to get into serious trouble. Mind you, the brakes are so darn good that a following driver may appear on your rear seat if you are forced to a sudden and complete halt unexpectedly.

For the technical, this E250 CDI blue Efficiency Coupé is 36 per cent more powerful than the four-cylinder engine in the preceding model, but it consumes around 17 per cent less fuel. Two-stage turbocharging, precise 'piezo' injectors and the latest common rail technology lies behind this dramatic improvement.

VERDICT

COMFORT

★★★★★

Front, or back, this car provides the ultimate in class for any shape of occupant.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

7.2 seconds to reach 100 km/h in a large family coupé, with a smallish engine, is fantastic.

COOL

★★★★★

Seldom does this writer consider that a coupé, no matter how delicious, could possibly be not only cool, but also worth five stars to boot.

QUALITY

★★★★★

She's so good that I wanted leather, everywhere.

HANDLING

★★★★★

At the sort of speed achieved on test here, nothing less than five stars seems right.

PRACTICALITY

★★★★★

In class perfect, but four seats knocked one star off, and yes, yes, I know...

RUNNING COSTS

★★★★★

A combined total of only 5.1 litres of diesel every 100 km allows a five star rating.

AT A GLANCE



PRICE

Starting from €55,600.

TOP SPEED

249 km/h.

0-100km

7.2 seconds.

ECONOMY

On the combined cycle, 5.1 litres of diesel for every 100 km travelled.

CO₂

Combined 158 gm for every km travelled.

ENGINE

4 cylinders displacing 2143 cc.

POWER

500Nm from only 1600 rpm-1800 rpm.

TRANSMISSION

Five-speed automatic, six-speed manual.

