

Mercedes touts strong genes as new G-Class unveiling nears

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Interior view teaser of Mercedes newly designed G-Class. Image credit: Mercedes

By JEN KING

German automaker Mercedes-Benz is demonstrating that the DNA of its G-Class is stronger than time as the model enters a new design era.

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In 1979, Mercedes engineers in Graz, Germany developed the G-Class, an off-road vehicle that has since become a timeless classic in the automaker's fleet. Since its debut, the model has been adapted as a "Habemus popemobile" in 1980 and has received AMG treatment and other design tweaks that have stayed true to the original's aesthetic and DNA.

"The G-Class has been on sale in global markets for customers since 1979, and despite numerous incremental updates to the front and rear lighting, engines and interior technology, the vehicle and its off-roading capability has remained unchanged," said Christian Bokich, department manager of product and technology communications at **Mercedes-Benz USA**, Atlanta, GA.

"The design is timeless and you'll see that when we lift the embargo on the vehicle late on Sunday, Jan. 14, that the design will continue to have universal appeal, and still attract the most exclusive of customers," he said.

Time and DNA

On Jan. 15 at the 2018 North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Mercedes will unveil the redesign of its G-Class vehicle.

To build anticipation for that reveal and stoke interest in the upcoming model release, Mercedes has designed a DNA-themed campaign to explore the popular G-Class.

Mercedes' Web site opens with a short film of an insect trapped in amber. The camera zooms around the hardened resin showing the details of the insect and air bubbles trapped within.

Copy to the side speaks to the G-Class's DNA being "stronger than time," which plays into the amberized insect transcending millennas.

A video connects Mercedes' amber concept further by showing the G-Class suspended in the golden resin, as if the

original was discovered by chance.

Mercedes describes the G-Class's DNA as "iconic, rugged and almost indestructible," but that its genetic makeup has been developed further in this new design era.

Mercedes-Benz G-Class: Stronger Than Time / The Amber Cube

In Mercedes' timeline feature, the automaker begins with the 1979 introduction of the G-Class before showing milestones in its nearly 40 year history. Notable G-Class milestones include the vehicle being the go-to model to transport the pope in 1980 and when its DNA was "spread" for a longer body in 1999, among other refinements.

When an automotive fan clicks the years featured on the timeline, additional details appear in a pop-up window.

To further its concept of "strong genes," Mercedes' effort also includes a user-generated content section where "strong stories" have been shared by G-Class owners.

Featured stories include Cole Walliser, who surfs and drives his G-Class along the California coastline. Beyond the fold, Mr. Walliser, a surfer and skateboarder, is shown camping out of his G-Class and living an adventurous lifestyle afforded by the durability of his Mercedes truck.



Cole Walliser with his Mercedes G-Class. Image credit: Mercedes

Additional UGC posts were shared by brand enthusiasts who drive G-Class models. The posts show the Mercedes vehicle in a variety of settings and include the hashtag #StrongerThanTime.

For consumers looking to see a sneak peak of the upcoming G-Class redesign, Mercedes has shared a series of 360-degree videos that give a glimpse into its interior through different lenses, including a widescreen and tube-look as well as ambient lighting.

As of press time, the Mercedes G-Class Web site does not feature exterior shots as to not spoil the reveal at the Detroit Auto Show. The model will go on sale in the United States market by late 2018.

Heritage calling

Many automakers tout the longstanding DNA associated with popular, long-time models.

The associated heritage often helps keep consumers interested in collecting as well as seeing where the automaker goes next in its design aesthetic since keeping the core DNA is intrinsic to commercial success.

Marking the 70-year milestone since the first Land Rover was introduced, a new event plans to bring the automaker's enthusiasts together to celebrate the marque's history.

Land Rover Legends will be held on May 26-27, 2018 at Bicester Heritage, gathering auto connoisseurs, collectors and restorers to the Bicester, Britain campus. Events serve as a means for automotive fans to explore a favorite brand in-person, building a sense of community as those with shared interests meet up ([see story](#)).

A similar approach to DNA retelling is to create storytelling content.

British automaker Rolls-Royce, for instance, gave a voice to a typically silent muse as it traced her influence throughout its 105-year history.

The first episode of the film series "The House of Rolls-Royce" centered on the Spirit of Ecstasy, the sculpture that sits on the prow of all of its cars, guiding both the driver and the vehicle's creators. In this short, actress Kate Winslet

narrates, bringing to life this iconic figure in Rolls-Royce heritage ([see story](#)).

Enthusiasm surrounding specific model types can be a connecting factor for affluent consumers.

"The G-Class has always been a specific model that attracts specific customers," Mercedes-Benz USA's Mr. Bokich said. "Around the world, it can be purchased as a base model that serves as a bare-bones off-roader for remote mountain cabins.

"In the U.S., while the standard offering has a large V8 engine and has a leather interior, the major metro areas where the G-Class is popular in the U.S. have been regional," he said. "The number one market is Southern California, followed by Houston, Dallas Austin and San Antonio, TX, South Florida, New York Tri-State and then Atlanta, GA.

"If you don't live in those areas, you don't see G-Classes very often, even in Boston, Chicago or other major cities. We just announced 2017 sales and we sold a total of 4188 units, so its exclusivity in ultra-high-net-worth customers and metro areas remains very high."

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