

AUTOMOTIVE

Mercedes-Benz dreams bigger with A\$AP Rocky

March 18, 2022



A\$AP Rocky and his creative agency developed a retro collection with Mercedes-Benz. Image credit: Mercedes-Benz

By NORA HOWE

German automaker Mercedes-Benz and American rapper A\$AP Rocky have teamed to develop a nostalgic capsule collection.

Born Rakim Mayers in Harlem, A\$AP Rocky's influence has expanded across music, fashion, art and culture, and over the last few years, Mercedes-Benz has strategically tapped into his creative prowess. The artist's creative agency AWGE worked with Mercedes-Benz to design a '90s-inspired range of apparel and accessories, featuring long-sleeve T-shirts, hats and sweatpants, merging the worlds of music, fashion and auto.

"A\$AP Rocky is a cultural icon in the hip-hop and fashion worlds, and because these worlds are closely intertwined with the automotive industry, it makes sense that Mercedes-Benz would choose him for a collaboration," said Julie Blackley, communications manager at [iSeeCars](#), Boston.

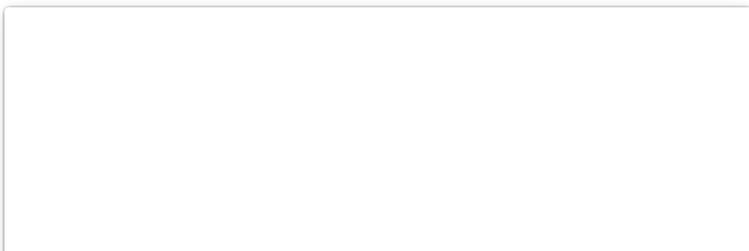
"We constantly see fashion designers aligning with automakers on special editions like Lamroghini and Versace, and since luxury cars are a staple in the hip-hop world, a hip-hop icon that's also a renowned fashion designer is a natural fit for Mercedes."

Ms. Blackley is not affiliated with Mercedes-Benz, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Convergence of culture

The Mercedes-Benz x A\$AP Rocky collection is the second major collaborative project between the two creative forces following the 2017 "Grow-Up" campaign that focused on people caught between freedom of adolescence and the austerity of adulthood ([see story](#)).

Innovation rests at the heart of the newest endeavor, as the brand and creative artist highlight the unique intersection of music, streetwear and cars while aiming to inspire enthusiasm among a generation of creative minds.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Mercedes-Benz (@mercedesbenz)

A short film depicts the rapper modeling pieces from the collection among older Mercedes-Benz models

Conceptualized by **Ill Studio** and shot by Gabriel Moses, a series of still imagery and a short video shared to social media bring the collection to life. To further its focus on innovation and development, three Mercedes-Benz models are featured in the campaign, spanning from the 1990s to today.

First introduced in 1991, the Mercedes-Benz S-Klasse W140 1993 was developed to offer maximum comfort through wide dimensions and double glazing for optimized acoustic insulation.

Launched in 1996, the Mercedes-Benz F200 Imagination is a concept car that introduced technological advancements that Mercedes-Benz uses today.

The third model in the shoot, the EQS, aims to capture the cultural and automotive developments of the Mercedes F 200 Imagination.

"The 90s were an iconic time in popular culture, and Mercedes-Benz played a major role during that time as being the quintessential luxury auto brand," Ms. Blackley said.

Since 2011, when he signed a \$3 million deal with Sony Music Entertainment, A\$AP Rocky has dominated the music and hip-hop space with more than 7.8 billion streams and 1.9 billion views on YouTube to date.

In 2018, the artist released his third studio album, TESTING, which has garnered more than one billion streams worldwide. He has also been involved in a number of luxury campaigns with **Gucci**, Christian Dior and LVMH's Fenty.

In one Instagram post promoting the collection, A\$AP Rocky wrote, "PHASE 1 MERCEDES BENZ x AWGE," suggesting this is only the first part of a long-term partnership, however, this has not been confirmed by the artist nor the brand.



The 1996 F200 Imagination concept car is prominently featured in the campaign. Image credit: Mercedes-Benz

The Mercedes-Benz x A\$AP Rocky collection is now available on the [AWGE](#) website and exclusively at U.S. retailer PacSun, where the New York native serves as guest artistic director. It ranges from \$60-\$175.

Music drives

While the automotive and music industries are not intrinsically linked, Mercedes-Benz is not the only luxury automaker to acknowledge their apparent symbiotic relationship.

Last spring, German automaker Porsche highlighted urban youth culture across Europe with the help of music journalist Niko Hls in an installment of the "Back to Tape" editorial series, which examines the art of graffiti.

An element of hip-hop youth culture, graffiti took shape in New York City in the 1970s. Its origins, however, date back to ancient Egypt, Greece and the Roman empire when people communicated with each other through wall paintings.

To celebrate its vast cultural history, three graffiti artists turn Mr. Hls' "Hip-Hop Culture A Road Trip through Europe" into legally sprayed artworks ([see story](#)).

In June 2021, Italian automaker Maserati crossed disciplinary borders through a collaboration with Japanese musician, designer and visual artist Hiroshi Fujiwara, blending the energies of music, street culture and cars.

Presented in an exclusive global premiere in Tokyo, the artist designed two special editions of the Maserati Ghibli, Operanera and Operabianca. The encounter between the visual codes of the automaker and the street style of Mr. Fujiwara's brand, fragment design, introduced an exclusive collection of 175 vehicles for global distribution ([see story](#)).

"Targeting younger audiences is usually a challenge for luxury automakers because they don't want to sacrifice the brand's prestigious identity," Ms. Blackley said. "Having someone like A\$AP Rocky reaches a younger demographic of consumers that are likely interested in high-fashion and fancy cars."

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