

AUTOMOTIVE

## Mercedes-Benz aims to reinvent class with new global campaign

September 6, 2023



*A group of students surround famous Mercedes-Benz models in the new initiative. Image credit: Mercedes-Benz*

By ZACH JAMES

German automaker Mercedes-Benz is looking to its past to celebrate its future with its latest activation.

Entitled "Defining Class since 1886," the new global campaign launched on Sept. 1, taking cues from traditional school yearbook pictures. Repurposing the word "class," the slot tells the manufacturer's story through a group of students, who take photographs that are inclusive of multiple significant Mercedes-Benz vehicles, each captured in front of a classic roll-down background.

Mercedes-Benz is clearly trying to pull in a younger crowd by building a bridge between its history and future," said Karl Brauer, executive analyst at [iSeeCars.com](https://www.iseecars.com), Woburn.

I find it interesting that there's so much focus on their historic models with so little attention given to their future electric cars," Mr. Brauer said. "The one glimpse of the new product doesn't offer a very good look at it, except for the interior touchscreen.

"That's probably its most impressive feature, but tacitly acknowledges the exterior isn't as compelling as the older cars."

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

### Reinterpreting class

"Defining Class since 1886" bridges the gap between the company's history and its place in modernity, showcasing a handful of stylistic and technological milestones through a timeless lens.

The campaign's namesake year refers to German engineer Karl Benz, widely considered the inventor of the first automobile in 1886, the Benz Patent-Motorwagen. Mr. Benz also founded Benz and Cie, which would merge with Daimler Motoren Gesellschaft to eventually form the brand we know as the Mercedes-Benz Group.

A forerunner for the electric and digital future. Our Concept CLA Class marks the start of a new era.

Discover more: <https://t.co/jLdSB0JTUZ#MercedesBenz #ConceptCLAClass #IAA23 pic.twitter.com/KbhzyMtZo>

Mercedes-Benz (@MercedesBenz) September 5, 2023

Now, nearly 140 years later, the automaker is presenting its latest concept car, the Concept CLA Class, which is fully electric with futuristic, free-flowing features like a full dashboard screen and an onboard "digital brain" supercomputer running digital functions, with AI and machine learning integrated as well, according to *Electrek*.

"When the world asked for faster horses, we invented a new class," says a voice in the promotional video.

"And we didn't stop there," the voice continues. "From three wheels to the three-pointed star, we reinvented it again and again.

"We've created class in every segment, from the icons of the past to the generations to come."

*A short film shows a wide range of Mercedes-Benz releases*

In the campaign video at hand, as well as in its corresponding photo shoot, the students, who run the gamut of high school archetypal characters athlete, nerd, class favorite, cool guy and the prom queen surround the new model, as well as multiple vehicles from the company's past as if they are another member of the titular "class." The push winks at the word, which is typically associated with the brand.

"The music and actors are very youth oriented, likely because Mercedes-Benz' own testing and surveys is showing more EV resistance from older buyers," said Mr. Brauer.

"Essentially, this campaign is targeting current Tesla buyers, which is a good buyer base for Mercedes-Benz to go after."

Until the end of October 2023, those wanting to have an experience like those featured in the advertisement can visit the set at Studio Odeonsplatz in Munich. The cars on display will change throughout the activation's run.

The 360-degree campaign will be present on Mercedes-Benz's website too, as well as its various social media channels.

Heritage spotlighted

Mercedes-Benz's latest move headlines the past with the 1959 300 SL Gullwing, 1979 G-Class, 1981 S-Class and the 2021 EQS, all of which led to the Concept CLA Class' creation.

In order, the Gullwing model set the automaker's iconic design codes and style, the G-Class brought the brand off-road, the S-Class introduced airbags for the first time and the EQS marked its first luxury electric vehicle.

Introducing a class-defining vision for the Mercedes-Benz entry segment: the Concept CLA Class.[#MercedesBenz #DefiningClass #ConceptCLAClass pic.twitter.com/AuE1By5Xjg](https://t.co/AuE1By5Xjg)

Mercedes-Benz (@MercedesBenz) September 3, 2023

Heritage is well-worn territory across the luxury landscape, especially in the automotive segment, but Mercedes-Benz is seemingly setting out to do something different from its competitors in this activation.

"The heritage focus is common for luxury brands, and this one seems to emphasize the actors and technology more than the actual design of the historic models," said Mr. Brauer.

"You can see the older cars, but they are relatively dark in most shots while the actors and recurring text and details, like the interior details and touchscreen, are brighter," he said. "This is actually more creative than many historic ad campaigns, and because Mercedes-Benz wants to play off its history without letting it over-shadow future product, it makes sense."

While British automaker Bentley resurrects forgotten favorites ([see story](#)), French automaker Bugatti creates celebratory custom cars ([see story](#)) and Italian automaker Lamborghini honors 60 years of operation with a variety of releases ([see story](#)), Mercedes-Benz looks to the future while drawing inspiration from its past endeavors.

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