

## CLIMATE PROTECTION



# “Combining Fascinating Vehicles with Responsibility”

Interview with Thomas Weber,  
Daimler AG Board of Management member  
responsible for Group Research  
& Development Mercedes-Benz Cars

**Does Daimler have the right model range to offer mobility that customers can regard as environmentally “correct”?**

**Weber:** I’m convinced that a sensible attitude toward the environment doesn’t have to conflict with a fascination for exciting cars. Besides, we know that our customers don’t want to drive “Spartan” automobiles. Fascination and mobility must and will remain compatible. And we have a lot to offer regarding mobility within environmentally “correct” parameters, to use your expression.

**What exactly do you mean by that?**

**Weber:** Daimler already has 15 models on the market that consume less than 6.5 liters of fuel per 100 kilometers. And all of them are fascinating products. For instance, the new smart fortwo cdi is the world champion as regards CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, while the E320 BLUETEC was honored with the title “World Green Car of the Year.” This year we’ll celebrate the European launch of the BLUETEC E 300, the world’s cleanest diesel passenger car in the premium class, which complies with the EU5 emission standards. But that’s only the beginning. Just take a look at our “Road to the Future” program: at the IAA auto show in Frankfurt we presented 19 specific examples of sustainable and fascinating mobility from Mercedes-Benz, including models that are either already being series-produced or will be in the near future. The message is clear: we aim to meet tomorrow’s challenges by offering customer-oriented innovations. That’s why you can expect to see Daimler produce further innovations for more environmentally friendly mobility.

**As a premium automaker, how do you intend to reconcile customers’ demand for more environmental friendliness and their actual purchasing behavior?**

**Weber:** We’re going to implement all of these innovations in production vehicles in accor-

dance with the demanding deadlines we’ve set ourselves, while also ensuring top quality and keeping an eye on costs. Here, we’re relying on flexible modular concepts that enable us to create customized solutions for several model series. That’s the only way we can master this challenging task. Sustainable mobility and appealing prices don’t have to be incompatible. And let’s not forget one thing: we aim to continue producing premium products with top-notch technological solutions for environmentally friendly mobility in the future as well.

**“Sustainable mobility and appealing prices don’t have to be incompatible”**

Thomas Weber

**Will customers appreciate this enough to pay higher prices for your automobiles?**

**Weber:** Yes, because they appreciate premium products with premium solutions that lead to more environmentally friendly operation. Our customers also know that everyone can play a role here by driving in an environmentally responsible manner. In fact, it’s possible to reduce fuel consumption by 20 percent in this way. And that’s good news – both for our customers themselves and for the environment. This is why we’ve also been offering our customers ecologically oriented driver training programs for many years now.

**How will the EU stipulation of 120 g/km on average for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions affect the Mercedes-Benz Cars fleet?**

**Weber:** We have reduced the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of our Mercedes-Benz Cars fleet by 20 per-

cent since 1995. That makes us the leading company in this regard in the German automotive industry. We basically accept the very ambitious targets set for Europe, and as a manufacturer we accept the challenge. However, we won’t reach the goal of 120 g/km by means of automotive technology alone. So it’s important to use an integrated approach in which the oil industry, drivers, and politicians all do their share – for example, by using alternative fuels, driving in ways that optimize consumption or improving the infrastructure. I’d also like to make another key point about emission limits here. The demand for overall emissions limits or rigid one-size-fits-all regulations won’t help us reach our goal. We argue that the differences between the manufacturers’ product portfolios should be taken into account.

**Can your claim to be the “best in class” in every automobile category be viewed as a call for more competition?**

**Weber:** It’s a well-known fact that only those who strive to do the seemingly impossible make any progress. And right from the start, Mercedes-Benz, as the inventor of the automobile, has set the benchmarks for automobile construction – and sporting excellence. We will continue this tradition of pioneering achievements in the future, and inevitably this will lead to fiercer competition.

**Isn’t that like wanting to win gold medals in shotputting as well as sprinting?**

**Weber:** Don’t misunderstand me. We’ve got the experience, the know-how, the creativity, and the pioneering spirit. But above all, we’ve got the highly qualified and motivated teams we need to achieve these ambitious goals. To stick with your example, I’m convinced that we’ll be able to combine fascinating vehicles with responsibility – and to excel at both shotputting and the hundred-meter dash – by comparison with the worldwide field of competitors.