Black is the new black for the Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team thanks to Spies Hecker by Axalta

Bold 2021 livery features a new black and a new PETRONAS green.

26 March 2021 – The black livery is making a return for the Team that has been a dominant force in Formula One™ and made history with seven consecutive FIA Formula One™ Constructors’ Championships. The Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team has used the colour again on the livery of its 2021 title contender, the Mercedes-AMG F1 W12 E Performance, which was unveiled on 2 March 2021 at the Team’s headquarters in Brackley, England, ahead of the first race weekend of the season in Bahrain.

Andrew Moody, Head of Paint and Graphics at Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team, says, “the new livery combines the all-black from 2020’s season with a re-introduction of our iconic Stirling Silver and we have revamped the PETRONAS green. The burgundy that represents Principal Partner INEOS is back, too.” The Team has relied on Spies Hecker, one of Axalta’s premium global refinish brands, a leading global supplier of liquid and powder coatings and an Official Team Supplier, for more than seven years.

Performance and perfection

The Mercedes-AMG F1 W12 E Performance is the first to use the E PERFORMANCE designation, signifying the Team’s closer alignment to the Mercedes-AMG performance division.

E PERFORMANCE is the new technology label that will be used in product names and badges on all forthcoming Mercedes-AMG performance hybrid cars. The link is reflected in the car’s most striking addition to the new livery: the AMG branding on the engine cover.

Andrew explains how complex these are to paint. “The AMG pattern is painted, that’s the first and most important thing to say. Many people assume they are decals, but they are not. Each one is graded between two colours – white and grey – depending on where they sit, so this is a very complex area of the livery. Because of that, we must rely on Spies Hecker to perform because we simply don’t have the option for a second try. Our painters need smooth application, easy blending and a perfect finish. It’s very much like the races themselves, we have to deliver from the moment we are on track,” he says.

Black fades into silver

With an average global TV audience of 87.4 million people per Grand Prix[1], having a strong, bold livery that stands out and leaves a lasting impression is vital. This year’s black – Midnight Black - is a non-metallic, solid black that is deep and rich in colour.

Andrew says, “It is different to the black we used last season. It is even more intense, giving a truly striking presence on track and on TV.”

The fade from black on the front of the car to Stirling Silver on the engine cover is extremely complicated as it encompasses six unique shades. It passes across seven different panels, each of which is a different shape. This complexity means it is essential to the design that every interchangeable component match up with the adjacent panels perfectly in terms of placement, size, shape, colour and shading. In a 2021 season with 23 races over 10 months - including three double headers and two triple headers - the rapid painting of components between race weekends to ensure the race cars are ready for each Grand Prix weekend is especially challenging for Andrew’s team.

Andrew says, “We work with specially built jigs, which are essentially dummy parts that allow us to reproduce each individual component accurately in terms of its size and shape, and most vitally, also the colours, lines, shading and design. We are constantly creating new jigs as the cars evolve over the season. It is quite complicated and intricate to spray three panels that come together with multiple shading and lines crossing the joins, and to get it right. This is where Spies Hecker’s Permahyd Hi-TEC 480 helps us deal with the sometimes-daily challenges of getting this right, quickly and easily.”

The Paint Shop uses a variety of Axalta’s Spies Hecker products, including Priomat® Wash Primer 4075, then either Permasolid® HS Vario Primer Surfacer 5340, a high-solid primer surfacer, or Permasolite® HS Performance Surfacer 5320, a fast-drying 2K HS sanding surfacer. The Team’s colour gradients are painted with Permahyd Hi-TEC 480 Basecoat and the paint shop finish components with Permasolid® HS Optimum Plus Clear 8650 or with Permasolid HS Race Clear 8700. When speed is of the essence, Andrew’s team uses Permasolid Speed-TEC Clear Coat 8810.

“We still have our tribute to Niki Lauda, our Non-Executive Chairman, who sadly passed away in May 2019. There is one bright red star on either side of the chassis just behind the drivers’ headrest, below the roll hoop. These, like the AMG pattern, are painted and not decals as many people believe,” Andrew says.
Go with the flow

The instantly recognisable flow line of PETRONAS green is back on the W12, and PETRONAS GREEN also appears on the front and rear wings, nose, mirrors and halo. The green this year is a solid colour, making it even more striking and bold against the deep black car.

Andrew says, “we are continuing the progression of the flow lines we have featured since 2017. This year, there’s no fade on the edges again, keeping the livery sharp and clean.” The green flow line is joined this year by a flow line above it in a highly-reflective silver, which marks more than a decade of partnership between the Team and PETRONAS. The two lines originate on the side of the nose and move along the side of the chassis and side pods.

Speed, solutions and support

Olaf Adamek, Refinish Brand Manager for Axalta, says, “The new car with its links to AMG is all about performance, which is apt, as at Axalta, we are built for performance. We could not be prouder to have played our part in the historic seventh Constructors’ Title the Team won last season. We know that Andrew, his team, and the rest of the Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team at Brackley and Brixworth, will be pushing the limits all season to be the best every race weekend. And we will be there, alongside them, making sure the race cars look as good as they perform.”

For more information about Axalta’s Spies Hecker, please visit www.spieshecker.com and to follow the Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team, visit www.mercedesamgF1.com.

About Spies Hecker

Spies Hecker, a global refinish coating brand from Axalta, develops optimum and practical paint system solutions that make bodyshop work easier and more efficient. Originally from Cologne, Germany, and with over 135 years of success behind it, Spies Hecker’s high-quality product systems, customised service and tailored training demonstrate its partnership with the refinish industry. The paint brand is one of the world’s leading vehicle refinish brands, and is available in over 75 countries worldwide.

Spies Hecker – simply closer!