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## FIRST GLANCE

# A Mercedes With Lear Jet Luxury and Vista Cruiser Practicality



Mercedes-Benz R-Class

By **NICK KURCZEWSKI**

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**Introduced on Wednesday:** Mercedes-Benz R350 and R500

**What's the point?** The R-Class offers the room and load-lugging capacity of a sport utility, minus the emotional baggage of actually owning one. In Mercedes parlance, the R is a "sports tourer." Loosely translated, it is a luxury wagon with seating for six (in three rows).

**Is it real?** Yes, the R-Class goes on sale later this year as a 2006 model.

**The company line:** "The R-Class opens up a new and

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exciting marketing segment." -- Thomas Weber, member of the board of management at DaimlerChrysler AG.

**The view from here:** Mercedes has been busy expanding its lineup with hard-to define vehicles like the CLS, a sedan dressed in sexy coupe clothing; now it is the R-Class's turn to defy categorization. At the press introduction, Mercedes officials referred to New York City and the luxury of space - but like a flat in SoHo, space does not come cheaply in the R-Class.

**What makes it tick?** The R350 has a V-6 engine and the R500 gets a V-8; a six-cylinder diesel engine will also be available. A 7-speed automatic transmission and permanent four-wheel drive are standard.

**How much? How soon?** The R-class arrives later in 2005, priced above the recently updated M-Class S.U.V. but under \$50,000.

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reviews the Mercedes Vision R, which can best be visualized as a marriage between a station wagon and a minivan.



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