

Maserati's hybrid hack

You want a Maserati without the fuel bills. Maserati wanted a hybrid without the weight. By **Ben Miller**

The MC20 supercar is the product of a boldly binary electrification strategy. Maserati will happily sell you one with an engine, a unique twin-turbo V6 with Fi-style pre-chamber combustion tech. Or, if you're happy to wait, in time you'll be able to buy an electric one. There is no half-and-half hybrid. Crossing the streams, to Maserati's mind, just adds weight and smother's purity under an unwanted pile of compromises. And you can see its point.

BUT THE LEVANTE'S AN SUV...

Indeed it is, and a very different proposition, obviously. SUVs love a bit of electrification. Jaguar, Audi and Merc all strode into the battery-electric arena with an SUV first.

Maserati's yet to go that far. Its new crossover, the Grecale, will be available as an EV. But in the meantime, and following the arrival of the Ghibli Hybrid last year, Maserati has upgraded its mild-hybrid powertrain to create a petrol/electric version of the ageing but deeply desirable Levante, Italy's Macan.

The promise is V6 power, diesel-beating low-rev response,

e-Booster (left) helps pressurise the turbo (right) when revs are low



improved fuel economy and reduced CO₂ emissions (by 18 per cent relative to its V6 petrol, Maser claims). It also reckons the Hybrid's a sweet drive. Weight is reduced and weight distribution improved (lighter engine up front; small battery out back).

This being only a mild hybrid, there is no e-motor. Instead, Maserati combines the conventional (a belt-driven starter-generator capable of both charging the battery and driving the engine) and the less conventional; namely an electric compressor capable of pressurising the manifold on demand. The latter is particularly useful at low revs, when slovenly exhaust gases struggle to energise the turbocharger.

WHICH BIT DOES WHAT?

In normal driving, the four-cylinder engine is assisted only by the compressor, its efforts boosting efficiency, torque and response. But in Sport mode the system goes all-out, driving the crank directly using the starter-generator and supporting the turbo's good work with the electric compressor (or 'e-Booster').

The numbers are good – 325bhp and 332lb ft from a 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbo, helping the Levante to a 0-62mph time of 6.0sec dead and a 149mph top speed. The proof will be in the driving, of course, but the Levante's track record is a good one and the Hybrid has on-paper promise. The powertrain employs both a limited-slip diff and a torque-vectoring all-wheel-drive system, one which – being Italian – is more than happy to forget the front axle and punt 100 per cent of its drive rearward.

INSIDE MASERATI'S HYBRID LEVANTE

DIFFERENT STRATEGIES

When efficiency is the priority, the starter-generator charges the battery and the e-Booster boosts, pressurising the manifold at low revs when the turbo's sleepy and weak

FOUR-BANGER

2.0-litre turbo four-cylinder petrol engine is, logically, from Stellantis stablemates Alfa. It's fitted with a starter-generator, the e-Booster and a control flap

V6 GRUNT! KINDA 325bhp and 332lb ft of torque – not bad for a four, and not far short of the V6 Porsche Macan's 349bhp and 354lb ft

A mild hybrid, but not in terms of performance

