

Sony's newly launched Afeela 1 electric car feels outdated?

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While there was plenty of new car news at CES 2025, the most talked-about topic at this year's event was a somewhat familiar name: the Afeela 1. Over the past five years, Sony has introduced several variations of this electric concept, first as the Vision-S in 2020, then the Vision-S 02, before changing the name to the Afeela in 2023 and finally the Afeela 1 this year.

Along the way, the car, which has yet to make it to production, has lost some of its funky styling, while remaining faithful to a set of specs that sound modern, but are from five years ago. Everything about it feels a little off, including the starting price: \$89,900.

This year's Afeela 1 is essentially unchanged from last year's show car. The only significant update is found in the sensor cluster that protrudes from the front edge of the hood. A LiDAR module stands tall, along with a couple of cameras on the roof, staring in opposite directions like 'chameleon eyes'.



While that detail isn't exactly glamorous, it's the only visual highlight in the Afeela 1's otherwise bland design. The only other exterior feature worth mentioning is the screen embedded in the front edge of the hood. That "media bar" is something else that would have seemed novel and interesting on a concept car a few years ago.

This screen is supposed to welcome you to the car or send a message to those around you. But it's hard to read from a distance, and up close you can see a seam down the middle where the two panels are joined together.



To open the driver's door, you either tap a button in the app or press a small button on the pillar. There are no door handles to pull, not even a door like on the Ford Mustang Mach-E. It would be weird if you parked in the winter and the door was frozen shut. Then the question of how to open the door would be a problem.

Stepping into the cabin, we find a space as simple as the outside, except for one thing: the screen that stretches across the dashboard. The presence of a vivid and clear central control screen is the only thing that reminds users that this is a Sony product.



The displays, along with the ambient lighting inside the car, are fully customizable, with the same kind of themes found on the PS5, such as Ghost of Tsushima and Fortnite, each spanning the interior in the right colour sequence, adding a bit of personality to the otherwise monotonous surfaces.

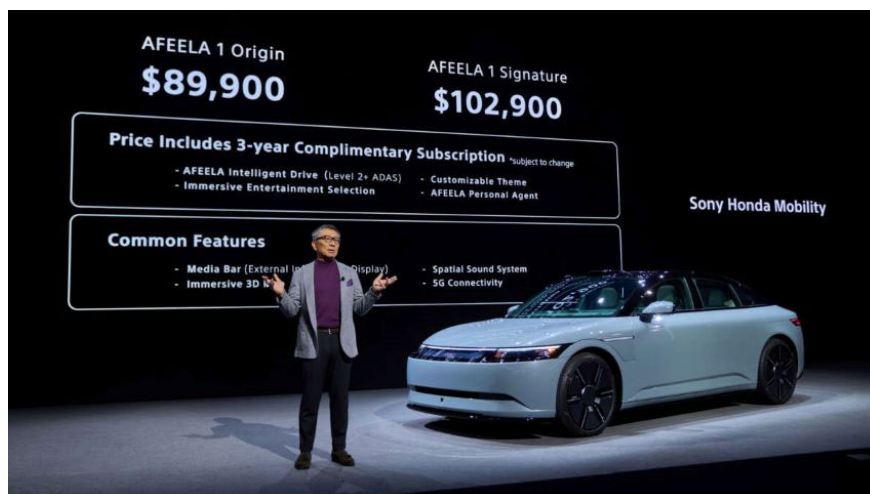
The large central control/entertainment screen is the main highlight, but look a little lower and you'll find the volume knob is a clunky affair. It's larger than the iDrive knob on most modern BMWs, but it only controls the output of the 28-speaker Dolby Atmos sound system.

The software interface still looks unfinished, just a two-row grid of oversized logos representing apps, settings, and vehicle controls. Given the width of the screen, important controls can easily stretch out of reach of the driver, forcing you to pull the entire array back to the left to get what you need.



Charging speed is an issue. The Afeela 1's maximum charging speed is 150kW for its 91kWh battery, giving it an estimated range of 300 miles. Compare that to the cheaper Lucid Air, which charges twice as fast and can go over 400 miles on a single charge, and you start to see Sony's real problems.

There are two versions of the Afeela 1, the \$89,900 Afeela 1 Origin and the \$102,900 Signature. The latter gets larger wheels (21 inches versus 19 inches), a rear-seat entertainment system (screens embedded in the headrests plus an HDMI input), and an additional camera. The Origin, meanwhile, is only available in black.



Five years ago, Sony's electric vehicle ambitions made for a strange but intriguing project. Now, it all seems to have gone wrong. What will happen in 12 months when the first commercial Afeela 1s start hitting the market? We'll see.

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