

The Lexus GS 300h Sheer Quality

by Ian Lynas

A recent spell with a Lexus GS 300h caused me to reflect on the short history of this premium brand, not from Germany but from Japan.

It certainly was a surprise for the German premium car brands when a new name appeared on the block-Lexus. Yes a new global challenger had emerged from the other side of the world to dent the supremacy of Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz.

True Lexus is the luxury division of Toyota and in a very short history not only has it become the top premium car brand in Japan but it has ranked amongst the ten largest Japanese global brands. Born out of a project named F1 which began in 1983 the first production model arrived in 1989, the LS which immediately caught the attention of the world motoring press with its level of quality which remains true to this day. Worth noting that up until 2005 the brand did not exist as such in its home market.

That same year the RX crossover was launched and additional hybrid models arrived later. The performance end of the brand F was launched in 2007 and even a supercar the LFA two years later. Currently the USA is the largest Lexus market and while you may not meet a Lexus around every corner in Northern Ireland they have an exclusive quality and perhaps that is part of the success story.

The German carmakers in the premium sector have gone for quantity and in some cases with a loss of quality.

A colleague of mine, sadly no longer with us, once described the 3 Series as BMW's Cortina, I know exactly what he meant.

Recently the opportunity came my way to take the wheel of a GS 300h, I had previously tried one and how refreshing it was to journey in luxury and one Audi owner was suitably impressed, I got the impression that his switch from BMW to Audi was not what he expected, so perhaps a Lexus next time round. Stepping inside the GS 300h and you are





greeted by a very complete motor car and this is another key point where this brand scores highly.

Far too often when you consider one of the big three from Germany it is like going into a first class restaurant you pay for every additional crumb having in the first place thought that you have spent far too much already.

So why do people stick with the Germans? I believe a lot has to do with image, with Lexus everything is much more subtle.

Hybrid technology is now a major part of the Lexus story and looking at the car

I had, under the bonnet a 2.5 litre petrol engine which is in harmony with an electric motor/generator.

The end result, maximum power of 178PS which is enough to give brisk performance figures, rest to 62mph in nine seconds and on to a top speed just shy of 120mph while the maximum speed in EV mode is 46mph.

Looking at economy and depending on the size of wheel fitted, mpg figures can be in the 60s.

The list of standard equipment is most impressive, just about everything you would imagine should be in a car in this class.

With the GS 300h you can choose from, Executive Edition, Luxury, F Sport and Premier and the price band circa £33,495-£43,245, taking into account very competitive pricing for a car in this class. When it comes to options the list is pretty slim as the GS 300h is so well equipped.

Summing up a luxury car which is very subtle and not until you get behind the wheel does the full story emerge that this is an exceptional motor car.

driven June 2016