

## Mercedes-Benz CLA-Class

By Jim Mc Cauley

Mercedes-Benz have introduced a further model range in their new and extremely elegant CLA-Class. The 4-door coupé is based on the architecture of the A-Class, but stretches its donor platform to provide the underpinnings for a larger and more elegant saloon. Aimed at persuading younger customers to get behind the wheel of a

Mercedes-Benz instead of an Audi or BMW, the car immediately succeeds in its rakish good looks.

Powered by a choice of 4-cylinder petrol and diesel engines, test choice at launch was the 211bhp 2.0 litre petrol model badged CLA 250 and the CLA 220 CDI diesel. This 2.1 litre turbocharged model produces 170 bhp and will be the range's popular seller.

With a choice of two suspension systems the test selection also provided the opportunity to try both. Although a 6-speed manual gearbox is available on the

smaller engined petrol models, both of the test vehicles featured the company's 7-speed dual clutch transmissions, which considerably add to the appeal of the cars.

The diesel engine can clearly be identified at tick-over on the exterior, but in the cabin it maintains a refined response across the rev band. The benchmark 0-62 mph time is a nifty 8.2 seconds while a substantial 350 Nm of torque from 1400 rpm allows for no-nonsense overtaking with little encouragement to the throttle pedal.

Throughout, the 7-speed gearbox progresses seamlessly up and down the ratios although the sports suspension on this car demonstrated its firmness even on the relatively smooth roads of the test route. Even the alternative Comfort set-up on the CLA 250 proved firm, but by far the more preferable choice for roads at home.

The turbo-petrol option returns a 0-62 mph time of 6.7 seconds and tips the overall top speed of the diesel model by just 7 mph at 150 mph. On both models, steering feel is good but possibly not as exacting as the cars' ultimate performance should demand, while brakes provide more than the necessary confidence to quickly haul down from higher speeds.



Cabin accommodation majors on the front seat occupants with excellent room and a quality interior stretched to the limits on the sportier options with brightly banded upholstery while full leather is an option. With the coupé style roof sloping quickly,



rear access requires a neat drop into the cabin to find adequate if not over generous space – but if rear room is an important consideration, then there are the larger range options.

Equipment-wise, the new CLA maintains the Mercedes priority of safety provision, and all models come with 'Attention Assist' drowsiness detection technology and 'Collision Prevention Assist' which helps to protect the car from rear end collisions into slow moving or stationary vehicles. Optional electronic safety support systems include

lane tracking, blind spot alert, auto headlight dipping and auto steering operation for both parallel and right angle parking.

On the economy and environmental fronts, the sector leading aerodynamics of the car contribute to its overall fuel economy which on the diesel for mixed driving is given as 62.8 mpg, and for the petrol model 46.3mpg. With a CO2 emissions of 112 gms/km, the 220 CDI model is in Band C for annual car tax while the CLA 250, with a CO2 emissions of 142 gms/km is in Band F.

The vehicles are available in a choice of two trim levels, Sport and AMG Sport which carries a premium of £2,200. All models come with a wide range of standard equipment which includes cruise control, rear parking sensors, Bluetooth connectivity and split folding rear seats to extend the already generous 470 litre boot space.



The CLA 220 CDI is listed at £29,355 in Sport trim and the CLA 250 will be officially priced nearer to its on-sale date.