

Review of the Mercedes-Benz CLA



by Fraser Lucas



LOOKS

The overall profile of the CLA hasn't altered much at all from the old car, but to use that cliché, the devil is in the detail. It's a saying Mercedes has taken seriously when you notice the three-point star logo is dotted all over the grill, and the lights are shaped the same way. It's also gentler looking, lacking the snarly aggression the previous car possessed. Some might view it as a bit too glitzy, but there is an elegance to be found.

HANDLING AND PERFORMANCE

Make no mistake, the CLA looks petite, but the fact is it's a near two-tonne electric car. Lighter hybrid petrol versions of the car won't arrive until early this year. However, once behind the wheel, you never feel like you're lugging an oversized paperweight, but wielding a lightweight with a cat's agility. The ride doesn't end up being firm either, balancing some

squidgy softness amidst the tight handling. Currently, there's only one electric option with 272 BHP, which does enough to keep it peppery.

PRACTICALITY

The CLA is now festooned with large screens – one for instruments, one for infotainment and, optionally, one for the passenger side. Bad news is there's not much in the way of actual controls, but the addition of a Virtual Assistant allows for useful voice commands to the AI system.

Whether it's asking for directions or turning the heater down a touch, it can figure it all out with little snag.

COST

Prices start at £45,615 and go up to £53,120. On paper, there is so much equipment as standard, it's hard to argue against the base car, where privacy glass and heated front seats are just a few of the many toys available.



Verdict

All the blueprints of Mercedes' near future make their debut in the CLA, and so far, it's a nice change of tactics. There is something to admire about its engineering and competitiveness, whether that be the clever AI assistance or the tidy handling. It's even possible the eventual release of the hybrid version will only further cement its high bar status in the market.