

A different Class

Ian Lamming drives the Mercedes GLA

YOU know, sometimes I can be a bit dim, but the penny has finally dropped. Duh!

I appreciated that Mercedes GLA was a small Mercedes off-roader but it's just dawned on the parentage of this diminutive 4x4.

Like most things there's a clue in the name, GLA – so it's a GL, that's the off-road bit, and it's an A Class.

There you have it. It's not so much a shrunken GL, because that's not really possible. So it is very much a pumped up A Class, which is a splendid idea.

New A Class is a cracking car; it's just so brilliant to drive. But there are times, particularly if you live in t'country like I do, that you need a bit more.

That's more ride height, more grip, more go-anywhere ability, which is where GLA strikes the perfect balance because you don't need SUV all of the time.

Seldom to we tackle rocks, ruts, mud and deep snow. But we are often greeted by floods, gravel, muddy verges and frozen slush.

It's at times like this that the GLA can help you through tricky times.

I lose count of the times I am confronted head-on by delivery men and school buses who refuse to yield and force me into the verges. In some vehicles it is touch and go as to whether I am able to return but in the GLA there's never a problem thanks to its all wheel drive, torquey diesel, larger rough-terrain-rubberised alloys and taller stance.

When you go all urban it adopts the sprightly characteristics of the A220, so it will nip and tuck, sprint and stop and park with aplomb.

On the sweepy stuff it feels planted, poised and purposeful. It likes the country roads and loves to be driven.

But at the end of the day, when you are tired and tetchy, it rewards with an ease of use that somehow only Mercedes seems to imbue into all of its vehicles; a relaxing, cossetting and effortless ability to swallow miles and get you home – now that I do understand.

Fact File

- Mercedes GLA220
- Engine: 2.1 twin turbocharged diesel
- Power: 177HP
- 0-60mph: 7.7 secs
- Top speed: 135mph
- Combined miles per gallon: 56.5
- Transmission: seven-speed auto
- CO2 g/km: 130

