

Inspirational

class act

Ian Lamming enjoys the ride

Fact File

Model: Mercedes A220 CDI AMG
 Engine: 2.1 litre turbo diesel
 Drivetrain: seven speed auto
 Power: 170PS
 Top speed: 137mph
 0-62mph: 8.2secs
 Insurance group: 25
 Miles per gallon (combined): 64.2
 CO2 (g/km): 115

IT'S 9pm and Friday night; the job has just wrapped up and shortly after heading homeward the signpost comes into view.

Urgh! Edinburgh 114 miles and I know home is 126; I'm actually closer to the Scottish capital than the house – humph.

Thank goodness I'm in a Mercedes, one of the few cars in the world proven to lower your blood pressure. It's a top spec AMG which comes with a rather special in-car hi-fi courtesy of splendid Harman Kardon.

Pink goes in the slot and the surround sound fills the new A Class in a way that will not only keep me awake and entertained but also inspired.

And that is what the new A Class is, an inspiration. Never have I seen such a radical and welcomed transformation of a range. The old A Class had a chequered start to life and was more to the taste of the mature driver, should we say. One look at the A220 CDI AMG and there is no doubt that the appeal has changed; it is sporty, it is sexy, it is sizzling.

That look transfers inside with a racy interior and superb driving dynamics and all of a sudden the 126 miles seems more of an opportunity than a chore.

CDI packs a real-time wallop that munches through the

miles with alacrity. It is just so strong that any slow coaches on the sparsely populated northern roads can be dispensed without a second thought. It flies in an unobtrusive and supremely relaxed fashion and it sips at the juice with welcome restraint.

Steering and handling are sharp as a razor and mechanical feedback provides all the information the driver requires on a spirited ride cross country.

The cosy cabin is comfortable and supportive in every way; it's a joyous place to be no matter how tired you feel at the beginning of the journey and just over two hours later, as I park up at home, I'm in no real hurry to leave the confines of this brilliant new model. Inhaling deeply the late night country smells I realise that A Class truly is a breath of fresh air. In fact being after 11pm at journey's end makes little difference and I think I actually feel better than I did at 9pm – not many cars can do that but the Mercedes can.

New A Class is a revelation sharing nothing with the older model save the three pointed star. It used to be entry level for those wanting a Merc on the drive but the new A has all the abilities and attributes needed to be in a class of its own.

