

Driven: The new Mercedes-Benz CLA

 By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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There has been lots of talk around the Fourth Industrial Revolution recently. Allied to this are discussions around Artificial Intelligence which always has me gobsmacked. I keep saying: "What's next?" But can Automotive intelligence be this beautiful in the all-new Mercedes-Benz CLA? Let's find out.

I had the pleasure of putting the Mercedes-Benz CLA through its paces in KZN recently. Whilst the weather was gloomy and wet, the latest offering from this German marque made up in many ways for the inclement weather.

It was really a thrill to be behind the wheels of a vehicle that handled well and drove oh so silently. Is this the most 'intelligent' vehicle I have driven?



The new Mercedes-Benz CLA is not only the most emotional vehicle in its class, it certainly is highly intelligent. From MBUX Interior Assist, which recognises operational demands from gestures and equips the interior with intelligence, through augmented reality for navigation and understanding indirect voice commands. The new CLA offers an array of intelligent driving solutions.

The design underlines the coupé character with its stretched form and design elements such as the bonnet with power domes or the rear licence plate, which has been moved down. As such, it does justice to its predecessor's status as a design icon.

The Design: Poetry in Motion

"As a four-door coupé, the new CLA intrigues with its puristic, seductive design and sets new standards in the design DNA of 'sensual purity'. It impresses with its perfect proportions reflecting the first design sketch: a long, stretched bonnet, a compact greenhouse, a wide track with exposed wheel arches and our typical GT rear end with a strong distinctive 'Coke-bottle shoulder'," says Selvin Govender, marketing director for Mercedes-Benz South Africa Cars.

“ *In short - the CLA has the potential to become a modern design icon.* ”

Flat headlamps together with the low slung bonnet and the diamond radiator grille with central star create the vehicle's sporty face. The two-piece, narrow tail lamps and the number plate housed in the bumper make the rear of the CLA look

especially wide.



Image by Naresh Maharaj

The sporty looking rear design achieves a balance between elegance and sportiness. Featuring pared-down lines, the precisely modelled side profile provides an interesting interplay of light and shade. Dispensing with the upper shaped edge of the side wall permits extremely muscular and athletic shoulder shaping, stretching from the front wheel arch through to the sculptured rear. Flush with the outer edge of the body, the wheels with their flared wheel arches epitomises dynamism and gives the vehicle a sporty presence.

Inviting Interior

In the interior, all elements are arranged according to the overarching design themes of 'high tech' and 'youthful avant-garde' – be that the steering wheel, the door handle operating module, the centre console or the seats.



Image by Naresh Maharaj

As in the A-Class, the unique interior architecture is shaped in particular by the avant-garde design of the dashboard: The designers completely dispensed with a cowl above the cockpit. As a result, the wing-shaped main body of the dashboard extends from one front door to the other with no visual discontinuity. The widescreen display is completely free-standing.

Intelligent Drive: Functions from the S-Class

The CLA has the very latest driving assistance systems with cooperative driver support, and thus provides the highest level of active safety in this segment with functions adopted from the S-Class.

For the first time, the CLA is able to drive semi-autonomously in certain situations. To do this, it keeps a close eye on the traffic situation. Improved camera and radar systems allow it to see up to 500 metres ahead.



Image by Naresh Maharaj

Active Lane Keeping Assist is able to warn the driver by means of pulsed vibrations in the steering wheel when the vehicle is unintentionally drifting out of its lane at speeds between 60 and 200 km/h. If the vehicle passes over a solid line, it can pull the vehicle back into lane by applying the brakes on one side.

Engine

The CLA is available in two engine variants – the CLA 200 and the CLA 220d. The CLA 200 with the M282 engine is powered by a 1.33-litre unit, which generates 120 kW and 250 Nm of torque with a 7G-DCT dual-clutch transmission. The CLA 220d with the OM654q 4-cylinder diesel engine is powered by a 2.0-litre unit, which generates 140 kW and 400 Nm of torque with an 8G-DCT dual-clutch transmission.

Retail price

- Mercedes-Benz CLA 200: R570,500
- Mercedes-Benz CLA 220d: R612,800

ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

Naresh Maharaj is a petrol head who loves cars and writing about them. He is also a Member of the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists. Naresh is also an international sports correspondent and an acclaimed corporate MC and voice-over artist. Naresh is a sports/news producer for community radio stations and also an award-winning sports journalist. Contact Naresh on nmaharaj321@gmail.com.

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