

Cross-Checking the Crossovers

What do Lexus and Mercedes bring to the luxury compact SUV scene? We size up their just-released hotties.

BY CHRIS CASWELL

PREMIUM CROSSOVERS — those versatile compact SUVs just as much at home carrying kids to soccer practice as arriving at the opera — continue to escalate in popularity. Sporting sumptuous interiors, serious sound systems, and high-quality styling, upscale compact crossovers such as the Audi Q3, BMW X1, Cadillac SRX, and Range Rover Evoque are hot, hot, hot. This season, two luxury heavyweights join the premium compact crossover cavalcade with the all-new **Lexus NX** and **Mercedes-Benz GLA250 4MATIC**, both loaded with more standard equipment, more cargo room, and all-wheel drive. Here's how these two head-turners are shaking things up.



Lexus NX

Mercedes-Benz GLA250 4MATIC



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POWER

Choose from **two engine options**: Lexus' first turbocharged gas engine, the 235 hp NX200T; and its gas/electric hybrid, the NX300H. Front-wheel drive is standard with all-wheel as an option. An idle-stop system on the NX300H saves fuel at those long stoplights.

The turbo 4-cylinder punches out 208 hp through a **7-speed dual-clutch automatic**, using the 4MATIC all-wheel drive. Want more ponies? Opt for the GLA45 AMG 4MATIC model with a whopping 355 hp. Front-wheel-drive-only GLA250s arrive next spring to become the base-price model.

STYLING



Toned down from the company's concept cars, it features a bold front like the IS, with an immense spindle grill, swept-back LED headlights, and sculptured sides.

Thoughtful touch: The roofline peaks above the rear passengers for **max headroom**, always a shortage in crossovers.

With a familial DNA that's apparent even if you can't see the three-pointed star, it has lines drawn from Mercedes' coupes and a powerful look with widely spaced wheels. On the inside, **grained aluminum** is the new wood, but options include burl walnut and others.



CARGO

The 60-40 split rear seat gives you **54.6 cubic feet of stowage** on a nearly flat floor. A power rear hatch is optional, and the low sill height makes for easy loading and unloading of everything from groceries to sail bags.



Fold-down rear seats and an almost flat **cargo space of 43.6 cubic feet** combine with a standard power-lift gate and a low and wide rear sill to make this perfect for luggage and golf clubs.

COOL STUFF

How can you not love door handles with hidden keyholes and night lighting? Plus, an **aviation-style overhead console** cleans up the dashboard and consolidates switches.

The optional **Distronic Plus cruise control** uses radar sensing to adapt your speed to the flow of traffic and maintain a safe distance behind the car ahead.

MSRP

Price not available, but best guesses are under \$40k plus options.

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