

CARGAZING

Street-Legal Show Car

High-End Lexus Coupe Shows Off Futuristic New Look

By Derek Price
CARGAZING.COM

If you're a Hollywood starlet who just signed a major movie deal, you're in luck. Lexus has just the car for you.

It's called the LC, and it's one of the most stunningly styled cars to be unveiled in years. Sleek, sexy and almost alien looking in profile, it's a dramatic change from the rolling sleep aids that have plagued the luxury market for the past eight years.

After the great recession, high-end buyers seemed to shy away from cars that looked too flashy. Nobody wanted to catch the ire of Bernie Sanders and Occupy Wall Street, I suppose, which is why luxury models have more or less looked like regular family cars lately, perhaps with a slightly bigger grille and a bit more chrome.

But just look at this thing. It screams, "The recession is over, baby!"

That's why if you just signed a multi-picture deal with 20th Century Fox — or want to look like



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LEXUS LC 500H

Stunning from any angle, the new Lexus LC coupe looks sleek and futuristic. With a starting price over \$90,000, it sits atop Lexus' 2018 lineup and shows off the brand's future direction.

you did — and have around \$100,000 burning a hole in your designer-jeans pocket, you can buy this luxury coupe that actually turns heads.

To be clear, the LC is first and foremost about high fashion. It looks like a Lexus concept car built for the auto show circuit with a miles-long hood, unusual door handles that hide flush with

the body, a wild back end and a sloping roofline that seems to levitate above the rest of the car.

The overall look absolutely works. It's rolling sculpture. It's pheromones stamped into steel.

The sculptural theme continues on the inside with carved-out armrests and a very contemporary layout that would look perfectly at home in an art museum. It's modern and clean, almost Scandinavian in appearance.

Look deeper than the styling, though, and I start to have some concerns about it.

One is the way it drives. While my LC 500h tester is one of the most exhilarating hybrids I've ever piloted — mainly thanks to its new-generation Multi Stage Hybrid System that ingeniously gives the driver a faster throttle response — that's a bit like saying I went to the best school in Mississippi. It's not something people generally brag about.

The hybrid LC feels sterile and safe from the driver's seat, which is not unusual for a Lexus but a bit disappointing for a car that looks so dangerous and thrilling on the outside. Even with augmented

engine sounds pumping through the speakers and "Sport+" mode engaged, there's only so much Lexus can do to make the 3.5-liter V6 feel different than it does in the Toyota Camry.

I have a feeling I'd enjoy driving the V8-powered LC 500 much more than my hybrid tester, which combines the V6 with electric motors to make a respectable 354 horsepower at a starting price over \$96,000. The faster, 471-horsepower V8 version looks like a bargain in comparison at \$92 grand.

I'm also concerned about Lexus' next-generation digital interface in this car. It uses a touchpad to control a cursor on the screen as if it's a 1996 Hewlett-Packard laptop. That's difficult enough when you're operating a computer while sitting still at home, so doing the same thing while driving over bumpy roads is absolutely maddening. I don't understand how anyone at Lexus thought this could be a good idea.

If you can look past the touchpad, the digital system itself is fine. It responds quickly to your inputs. The graphics are gorgeous. The screen is crisp and easy to read.

While the front passengers will be treated to luxurious leg room and spacious, supportive, easily adjustable seats, the back-seat passengers will have to tolerate second-class status. The sloping roofline that looks so gorgeous really eats into their head room and occasionally bumps their noggins.

That's the price to pay, though, for driving a street-legal show car.

What was tested?

2018 Lexus LC 500h (\$96,510). Options: Convenience package (\$1,000), touring package (\$1,790). Price as tested (including \$995 destination charge): \$100,295

Wheelbase: 113 in.

Length: 187.4 in.

Width: 75.6 in.

Height: 53 in.

Engine: 3.5-liter V6, plus electric motors (354 total system hp)

Transmission: Multi-stage hybrid

Fuel economy: 26 city, 35 highway

RATINGS

Style: 10

Performance: 7

Price: 6

Handling: 10

Ride: 8

Comfort: 9

Quality: 9

Overall: 8

Why buy it?

Not only is it one of the most head-turning new cars to hit the market, but it's a showplace for Lexus' latest technology and engineering. Its hybrid powertrain is one of the most responsive on the market.



Bulky hand grips are a fun — and sometimes useful — touch in the LC's cabin. Much like its body, the interior of this car has a sculptural look with carved-out armrests and striking lines.