

Road Test

ISUZU D-MAX

By Jim Mc Cauley



It's been around a long time, but that has simply enhanced its reputation as a powerful and rugged workhorse which has kept it top of its class in Northern Ireland. And to maintain its position, the heavily revised 2017 Isuzu D-Max receives a new 1.9 litre turbo diesel power unit and a modern makeover to add good looks to its legendary reputation.

The range features three basic bodystyles – single, extended and double-cab with five specification levels available – depending on model. Appearance-wise, the 2017 range features a new front bumper, bonnet, grille and

headlights with LED daytime running lights. In addition to the fresh appearance, the design also improves the aerodynamics which benefit fuel economy, performance and level of cabin noise.

But the big attraction is underneath and the new downsized 1.9 litre turbo diesel engine which maintains the vehicle's core workhorse capabilities of a 3.5 tonne towing capacity and a one tonne payload. The engine also meet Euro 6 standards without the need for the addition of AdBlue.

Producing the same 164PS as the old 2.5 litre unit and with 360Nm of torque availability, drive is via a new 6-speed manual gearbox or 6-speed automatic transmission.

On road, and there is a noticeable improvement in refinement from the four wheel drive models with the automatic easing its changes up and down the 'box with surprising smoothness. This was especially noticeable when towing a trailer loaded with another D-Max. Most models in the



range have a reversing camera on the upper edge of the tailgate. By lowering the tailgate when very close to the trailer, the screen image changes to show a plan view which aids accurate positioning

for hitching. At the vehicle's Northern Ireland launch there was an excellent opportunity to discover its off-road competence at Todd's Leap, highlighting the commanding confidence of the vehicle over challenging surfaces and gradients.

Taking the vehicle back on road with the load box empty, ride remains smooth with secure cornering and an overall more car-like response than its predecessor.

The entire model range is also supported by a comprehensive array of electronic handling packages with Electronic Stability Control (ESC)

and Traction Control standard. The four-wheel drive models have the additional benefits of 4X4 selection on the move as well as Hill Start Assist and Hill Descent Control as standard.

Occupant safety is also well catered for with height adjustable seatbelts and dual front, side and curtain airbags on all models.

Standard equipment is also good across the range with air conditioning, Bluetooth connectivity and electric windows standard from the range opening Utility model upwards.

Stepping up to the Eiger trim, these vehicles come with a reversing camera, alloy wheels, body coloured bumpers and a CD player. Cabin equipment increases as do wheel sizes as the range progresses through the Yukon, Utah and top Blade specifications.

Load bay width is just over 1.5 metres at its widest point while length varies from 2.3 metres on the single cab model to 1.8 metres on the extended cab model and 1.5 metres on the double cab.

In terms of running costs, the new D-Max shows improvements over its predecessors with better fuel economy and lower emissions. The 4X4 manual model has an official combined fuel consumption of 40.4mpg, a 4.45% improvement over the previous model, while emissions in the same model show a similar percentage drop from 192 to 183 gms/km.

And although the performance of the new D-Max may be its main attraction, Isuzu's confidence in the vehicle is shown in its 5-year / 125,000 mile warranty which gives additional peace of mind.



While the 2-wheel drive single cab utility model is listed at £18,840, the 4X4 range starts at £21,540 and extends to £32,340 for the top Blade 4X4 double cab. The automatic option adds £1,200 to the price of the manual vehicle. Depending on specification, insurance is set at either Group 39A or 40A.

(Driven May 2017)