

Gran Max gets the job done

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THE recent assault on the SA market by any number of manufacturers has left local customers pretty spoilt for choice.

For some this might just translate into a bit of confusion. I for one have not driven all of them, and lose track of the advantages and disadvantages of the various offerings.

When it comes to working bakkies the major consideration is purpose. The new Daihatsu Gran Max has some distinct advantages.

Despite coming from a reputable dealer network that offers reliable after sales service, it sells at R119 995 which is pretty reasonable.

It should be compared with other cab forward, seat over the engine and wheels design.

The reason for this is that they offer a unique city delivery advantage, ease of manoeuvrability as they have no snout.

PARKING BAYS

This makes the little truck ideal for zipping in and out of tight parking bays when doing deliveries. It really is much easier to judge when the vehicle's nose is just under your own.

A second advantage is for greater stability the load mass can be brought forward in relation to the rear suspension.

The new Daihatsu Gran Max can carry a full ton so this could become a consideration.

Other vehicles that offer these benefits are the smaller, cheaper units, mainly out of China. These have their place, but are in a different segment when you weigh up power and space considerations.

The Daihatsu is generally better finished and far more comfortable. Overall brand value is considerably higher generally speaking. When it comes to a vehicle that must earn its living this is important.

On the other end of the market is dominated by the slightly bigger Hyundai H100 and Kia K2700. These are fine workhorses, but will cost you about R50 000 more. No point in buying more than you need.

Impressive workhorse from Daihatsu



Vital to the Gran Max's role is the fact that its 1,5-litre unit has Dynamic Variable Valve Timing which improves torque at low revs. It produces 77kW and 140Nm. In addition it is geared for getting off the mark.

Its perky. Although it will easily take a full ton to the freeway limit, it is really meant for inner city delivery work and short inter-city hops as would happen in Gauteng.

In fact, if it has a drawback it would be that the driver's seat back is a touch low to recline in for a boring long-distance haul.

However, the driver's seat is adjustable through a range of 182mm, so it won't be necessary to actually measure job applicants.

With the gear lever dash-mounted it will comfortably carry three around town.

The low, 72cm loadbed with dropsides makes loading easy. Lifting something to not much above

the knee is substantially easier than past waist height and this should make a huge difference to loading and off-loading times.

The Gran Max's cab forward configuration also increases the loading area. Its load bed is 2,4m long and 1,6m wide.

This large loading area (over 3,7m²) will be for many more important than the mass it can carry.

Vitaly, and a huge plus over its smaller, cheaper rivals is that the Gran Max is equipped with ABS. Especially in a vehicle where the mass and, therefore, stopping requirement changes frequently.

In terms of safety the Gran Max also features crumple zones in front, dual side impact bars in the doors, and a collapsible steering column for frontal impacts.

Daihatsu are small vehicle specialists and overall fuel economy is an important aspect of their philosophical outlook.

They claimed consumption as low as 7.5l/100 km and my rough calculations, I didn't finish a tank, indicate they are not far out – unladen of course.

The suspension is by way of front Mac Pherson struts with coil springs in front and 5-ply leaf springs at the rear. These seemed to behave well

irrespective of load.

The wall to wall turning circle is a commendable 10 metres, which again will make a huge difference in city delivery situations.

Provided buyers understand what they have chosen the Gran Max for, I believe they will have selected the best vehicle for the job.

