

PICK ME UP

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✓ I don't have a commercial vehicle licence, which meant that I couldn't drive the D-Max on public roads. Luckily, the good folks at Isuzu came up with a cunning and rather expensive plan. They booked the Wabco proving grounds, in Chennai. If that wasn't enough, they lined up all three variants of the D-Max for our trucking pleasure.

Having never tested a commercial vehicle before, I sat back and thought about what you might want to know about a pick-up truck. Since a standard road test was ruled out, I thought I'd load it and drive around in an erratic manner. That didn't work because I couldn't find anything to load it with. So what follows is a CV road test, *Honk* style.

The first one is a bog standard single cab. This has two seats, power steering and a massive flat bed at the back. Then there's Space-cab. This is just like the single cab, except the cab itself is a little larger with storage behind the seats and the loading bay is smaller. Both of these look distinctly like commercial vehicles and neither has air conditioning.

Then the D-Max really gets cracking with the Space-cab Arched Deck. This doesn't look like a CV at all. It looks like one of those posh American pick-ups. This D-Max, minus fog lamps, shares its face with the MU-7 we

ISUZU'S NEW D-MAX COMMERCIAL VEHICLE IS ONE VEHICLE WE HOPE THE WORLD IS ALLOWED TO DRIVE. BECAUSE IT REALLY IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL SUB-₹8LAKH CARS OUT THERE

brought you earlier. That in turn appears to be a straight lift from a Cadillac Escalade. On the D-Max though, it looks really good. And this variant also has air conditioning and powered windows.

All of the D-Maxes have the same 2.5-litre four-cylinder turbo diesel with a five-speed manual gearbox. Hold on to something because this engine makes 134bhp and 294Nm of torque!

The result is a bargain basement pick-up that tops out 175kph (tested) and never feels out of breath. Come to think of it, is this the most powerful sub eight lakh vehicle on sale in India? Do write in and tell us.

The light steering makes manoeuvring a breeze and the vehicle feels very sure-footed at high speeds. Isuzu claims an ARAI kpl figure of 13 — figure 11 in the real world. That's still a range of 836km on a 76-litre

tank. Not bad at all.

As far as I can tell, there are only two drawbacks. The first is that they all have leaf-spring suspension at the back. They feel like really good leaf-springs, but still. The second is that all variants are classified as commercial vehicles. This means you can't drive one on public roads unless you have the right licence. I'm told Isuzu are in talks with the authorities to be able to sell the D-Max as a passenger car. Let's hope that works out because for less than ₹8 lakh (the most expensive variant), what you get is a Japanese pick-up that is meticulously engineered, thoroughly well put together, honest, hard-working, powerful, efficient, decent looking, economical and brilliantly priced. The D-Max gets a resounding 9/10 and a big hand. Well done Isuzu.

— The writer is a motoring enthusiast from Bengaluru



CLEAN AND CONVENIENT: The interiors of the D-Max is spartan and caters only to the basic needs

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