

PULLING NO PUNCHES?



Isuzu's mu-X is the underdog in the rugged full-size premium SUV space. Is there more to it than an impressive price tag?

WORDS: KSHITIJ SHARMA | PHOTOGRAPHY: VIKRANT DATE

The success of the V-Cross finally announced the arrival of Isuzu in the SUV market. So it was only natural that Isuzu had another go at the mid-size SUV market, this time with the mu-X. Available only with an automatic transmission, it does offer the option of a two or four-wheel drive, Rs 22.48 lakh and Rs 24.35 lakh respectively. The prices are considerably more affordable

than that of the Toyota Fortuner and the Ford Endeavour, but is the mu-X as good? Or are there any deal-breakers?

➔ BUTCH BITS

For starters, the mu-X looks intimidating and the DNA of the V-Cross is quite apparent. The massive chrome grille, the bonnet lines and slanting headlamps exude an aura that the mu-X is not

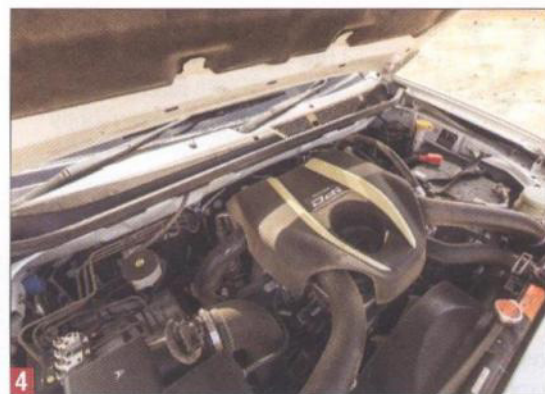
to be trifled with. Compared to the car it replaces, it stands 60mm shorter in length but 60mm wider and 35mm taller. Keep in mind, in other markets the mu-X has received a facelift, which the India spec car doesn't carry. A pity. At the rear though, things mellow down a fair bit. The wraparound tail lamps are simplistic at best and the rear, in its entirety, is remarkably similar to the car it shares a lot

with, the Chevrolet Trailblazer.

➔ THE CABIN

The mu-X offers a high and commanding driving position and the driver's seat is electrically adjustable. The dash design and materials used are appreciable, but the sense of occasion is lacking. The 7-inch touchscreen infotainment screen though works rather well. Coming to the rear

1. Material quality is quite good, but the dash looks uncannily bare. The infotainment system doesn't offer Apple CarPlay or Android Auto.
2. The rotary dial allows you to shift the layout on the fly and it works rather well.
3. The design of the clocks is simple and the entire instrument cluster is well laid out and easy to read.
4. The 3.0-litre engine makes plenty of torque, the 5-speed automatic gearbox, though, is a let-down.



bench, there is ample space but due to the 220mm ground clearance and the narrow doors, ingress is an uncomfortable exercise, especially for the generously proportioned. The seats though are split 60:40 and come with reclinable seatbacks. The rearmost two seats though best occupied by children, especially on long journeys.

→ POWERTRAIN

The 3.0-litre turbo-diesel makes 177PS of max power and 380Nm of peak torque. The Isuzu is also fairly light and when you add it all up, they prove to be adequate in the real world. The torque kicks in quite early, a tad below 1800rpm, making getting off the line a breeze. At 12.4 seconds for a sprint to 100kmph, it is only 0.2 seconds off the Fortuner's time. Now, if it had the facelift's six-speed gearbox, the story could have been different! As is, the Isuzu's nature is better suited for calm and relaxed driving in the city.

But when you hit the open stretches, the gearbox turns out to be a bit of a let-down. The gearbox upshifts early and even in manual mode the shift times are only

marginally better. The five-speed 'box also tends to eat into the fuel efficiency as the behemoth returns a shade under 11kmpl on the highway and a barely satisfactory 7.2kmpl in the city.

→ RIDE AND HANDLING

Ford's Endeavour has done much to counter the notion that ladder frame chassis SUVs can't steer. The mu-X is a more traditional SUV with properly vague steering, and plenty of body roll too. At speeds over 100kmph, it feels floaty and unnervingly heavy at crawling

speeds, especially while parking. In addition, the bigger bumps do make themselves felt as you can feel small shockwaves in the steering column. Despite the independent double wishbone at the front and multilink setup at the rear along with gas-charged shocks, the mu-X has considerable amount of body roll. This is down to the suspension being set up on the softer side.

Off the road is where the mu-X really shines. Shift the rotary dial on the centre console to 4H or 4L (for the really ricky stuff) and you're ready to tackle mother nature. Even in 4H, the mu-X has enough torque to climb most inclines without breaking a sweat. All you need is a little momentum. Plus, the 30.1-degree approach and 25.1-degree departure angles ensure even sharper gradients don't perturb the mu-X. For the even sharper inclines and trickier sections, the 4L, or low ratio, works like a charm.

>> The mu-X excels at two things in particular, road presence and off-road capability <<

→ VERDICT

Yes, the mu-X isn't as exciting as the Ford Endeavour or the Toyota Fortuner, be it in terms of the sense of space or equipment. But, the Isuzu offers decent creature

ISUZU MU-X SPEC CHECK

Engine:
3.0-litre 4-cylinder turbocharged diesel

Power:
177PS @ 3600rpm

Torque:
380Nm @ 1800-2800rpm

Transmission:
5-speed automatic

0-100kmph:
12.4 seconds

Mileage:
7.2kmpl (City)
10.95kmpl (Highway)

Price:
₹ 22.48 lakh - ₹ 24.35 lakh (ex-showroom, India)

comforts as well and undercuts its competition by quite a margin. What makes the Isuzu mu-X feel a bit special is the combination of its relatively affordable price and its serious off-roading credentials, making it a genuine off-road option for SUV enthusiasts in the country. **ZW**

