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Inner drive

Last month's Euro Bus exhibition (see review, pp16-17) was only my second time attending, but the feature that stuck out was the number of exposed drivetrains on show. Although remembered as a hall full of shiny, whole vehicles, the event this time bristled with bare chassis, silvery boxes and nets of heavy orange cables. It was fascinating to see these normally-hidden components up close on the Scania, Equipmake and ADL stands, just as it is captivating to look into a transmission with the case cut away.

Why don't we see such displays at UK truck shows?

First, their presence indicates the importance of battery-electric powertrains to the bus and coach market. Internal combustion engines were nowhere to be seen at the NEC. Although full-electric propulsion is being introduced into goods vehicles as well, public transport is clearly ahead (thanks no doubt to government subsidies).

Second is supply chain realities. While recent truck shows have displayed plenty of electric vehicles, in general they haven't been as stripped back. Many large commercial vehicle OEMs are developing their own entire battery-electric powertrain, as well as building the rest of the chassis and superstructure, under a single brand.

But that is not necessarily the way things are generally done in the bus and coach world. Coachwork can be built on a variety of chassis, so the body supplier, such as Irizar, might collaborate with a particular commercial vehicle OEM, such as Scania (and by the way they celebrate 30 years of collaboration next year). Scania exhibited a new Scania/Irizar i6s Efficient coach. But as those relationships are non exclusive, just down the aisle Irizar exhibited the same i6s Efficient, but with a DAF engine and ZF gearbox.

Third, in the case of bus maker ADL, was a much simpler reason behind why its new double-decker coachwork didn't put in an appearance at the event: it hasn't been designed yet.

In the meantime, commercial vehicle suppliers might stimulate further interest in battery-electric powertrains by showing off the internal components at future shows.
Roll on the CV Show: 18-20 April 2023.

Will Dalrymple
Editor



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