

With the added cost of Euro 6, truck makers are upgrading their vehicles to sweeten the bitter pill. MAN is no exception with its new TG, reports Ian Norwell from Munich

Solid performance

With chassis price increases in excess of €10,000 hitting fleet buyers for Euro 6 engined units by the end of the year, everyone in truck manufacturing is wisely adding as much value as possible. It may be in the form of brand new models – such as Volvo's FH and Mercedes-Benz's Actros – or extensive revisions to interiors, changes to powder and paint etc on existing units. Either way, if you're spending significantly more, goes the argument, you need to see and feel a difference.

So what will MAN's new TG range be offering? Well, there will be some 'soft' products: since last month's CV Show, MAN has already been including advanced telematics (sourced from Microlise, although bespoke for MAN) in all vehicle sales. Why? MAN chief executive Des Evans wants fleet managers to take the company's '3+2' package – three years' warranty and two years' R&M – and the latter is underpinned by the system.

Tough heritage

And so to Munich to drive MAN's new TG. Unmistakably teutonic, although perhaps with less sophistication and interior design flair than its German rival, the vehicles look like they will withstand the rigours of real-world service better than most. That's down to heritage: a 200,000km 18-tonne rental unit I drove in the UK recently had stood up exceptionally well to its mileage and the new TG should do the same. That'll be good for residuals and, in fairness, the interiors are much improved – so driver retention should be fine, too.

On to the driving experience, and I drove a TGL 12.250 with the DO836 common rail engine on a 4,500mm wheelbase version. With 250bhp and 1,000Nm power and torque mated to the MAN TipMatic 12 speed auto (a ZF-derived box), it performed well on the urban test route. My Carrier fridge-

bodied specimen coped very well with the heavy body and relatively high centre of gravity.

This is the natural habitat of an AMT (automated manual transmission). It's just a pity it's taken this well-honed version so long to arrive at 12 tonnes gvw. It will transform multi-drop operations, saving fuel, clutches and drivers' frayed nerves. A deliberate heavy boot had only a minor effect on progress, unless the kick-down button was activated. And that's another good reason for taking the telematics pack, especially when it comes to 7.5 tonnes. As for the cabin interior, that's new on the TGL and TGM, and the upgrade looks and feels good.

Meanwhile, there are no 6x2 tractors on German demonstrator fleets, so I went for the 4x2 TGX 18.480. The interior remains unchanged at Euro 6, but is sufficiently good for that not to be an issue. All the refinements seen elsewhere are present, with the ACC (adaptive cruise control) in particular functioning well. Also, in poor visibility, watching the displayed distance between you and the vehicle in front increasing and decreasing is comforting and useful information.

Manual gear intervention, and the six-stage exhaust and engine brake, are on the same control stalk. That's okay, because the former is hardly ever needed, while the latter is in continual use. Also, the mirrors are good, if a little bulky, certainly compared to Volvo's FH. The overall impression from the top and bottom of the new TG range is of smooth, drama-free operation, with low noise levels, backed by solid engineering, and much improved ride and handling.

Workshops will need to note the very occasional DPF (diesel particulate filter) intervention and bear in mind the truck's duty cycle, as per all Euro 6 trucks. But mixed fleets will not see the addition of AdBlue to feed MAN's recently adopted SCR (selective catalytic reduction) as an issue. Euro 6 price increases for MAN TG trucks will be between 8% and 10%. **TE**