



The Chinese contender

Though perhaps not a well-known brand in the UK, SAIC Automotive is China's number one automotive manufacturer and the seventh largest car and commercial builder worldwide. The group sold more than 7m vehicles in China in 2019 and exported to 48 countries around the world. SAIC purchased LDV in 2009 and launched the first V80 in 2011.

Its vehicles are distributed in the UK and Ireland by Harris Group, which stepped up after the cancellation of the CV Show to provide a glitzy online launch in June of the Deliver 9, a replacement for the V80 3.5-tonne van, after the original CV Show launch was scuppered. Now under the Maxus branding, this completely fresh model is powered by an in-house developed 2.0-litre Euro 6-D compliant diesel engine. The twin turbo motor will deliver 211bhp and 480Nm of torque. It incorporates high pressure fuel injection and a water-cooled intercooler, along with a two-stage oil pump to reduce energy use and twin balancer shafts, for smooth running.

Deliver 9 has a modern appearance, with traces of Transit to the front grille and Daily to the side profile. It boasts a much improved and comfortable cab environment and a relatively smooth and

Having launched new diesel and electric vans in the UK in 2020, with a pick-up due in 2021, Chinese automotive giant SAIC has also updated its branding, from LDV to Maxus. Dan Gilkes reports from its head offices

quiet engine. The van will be offered with front or rear-wheel drive, with rear-driven models having a choice of single or twin rear wheels. The 3.5-tonner comes in three wheelbases, with three body lengths and three roof heights to choose from. There will be panel van, minibus and single chassis cab layouts from launch.

The front-wheel drive model will also form the basis for the e-Deliver 9, a replacement for LDV's full electric EV80. The electric EV80 was the market leader in Norway last year, where it accounted for 3% of all electric vehicles sold. In the UK, LDV Maxus sold more than 300 EV80s to home delivery company Milk & More. The e-Deliver 9 will be available in a range of body styles and chassis lengths, initially at 3.5-tonnes gross weight. However, the company is also working on a 4.0-tonne model, to take advantage of the increased weight allowance for alternatively-fuelled LCVs that exists in many European countries.

All Delivery 9 models will have electric power assisted steering (EPAS), to allow the fitting of a host of advanced

driver assistance systems, such as lane departure warning. They also incorporate the latest Bosch ESP 9.3 advanced emergency braking system and Auto Stop Start as standard. In the cab there are six airbags, a 10" touchscreen and a multi-function steering wheel, keyless entry and button start, along with a panoramic reversing camera. A rather short first drive around the firm's production facility in Shanghai revealed that the Deliver 9 looks set to be a big step forward from the previous generation V80.

At last year's CV Show, the company announced that it would be launching an EV30 full electric mid-weight van in 2020. That model has been renamed the e-Deliver 3, in line with the larger van, and it was also launched earlier this spring. The e-Deliver 3 will be available as a panel van in two wheelbases. The longer wheelbase model has a maximum 1,000kg payload and boasts a 6.1m³ load volume, enough to fit three Europallets inside. The shorter model offers a 900kg payload and a 4.8m³ load volume, capable of handling two

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Europallets. Prototypes of the e-Deliver 3 have been undergoing final testing in Birmingham, London and seven other European cities.

Since first announced, SAIC Maxus has incorporated aluminium and composite materials into the bonnet and front wings, resulting in a 140kg cut in overall weight over earlier models. The vans will be powered by a choice of NCM lithium-ion battery packs, supplied by SAIC's joint venture partner Chinese manufacturer CATL. A 35kWh battery offers 200-220km of range (NEDC), while the larger 52.5kWh battery delivers a claimed 280-300km.

The e-Deliver 3 is powered by a 90kW motor, delivering 250Nm of torque and it comes with three driving modes - Eco, Normal and Sport. There are also three levels of energy recuperation, available in each mode, to maximise regenerative braking. Standard equipment will include a rear-view camera and parking sensors and right-hand drive production was scheduled to start in May 2020.

SAIC Maxus will launch the T70 pick-up in the UK in 2021. The company has been offering the T60 pick-up in less emissions-sensitive markets, with more than 10,000 of the trucks sold in Australia in 2019. With the introduction of the new Euro 6D engine, the pick-up becomes the T70, ready for European customers. The company is also developing a full electric version of the T70, using technology from the e-Deliver 9, which should make it here in a year or two.

SAIC is also considering exporting full electric light trucks to European markets in 2021/2022. Built under the Yuejin name at SAIC's facility in Nanjing, the 7.5-tonne truck would be branded as an LDV Maxus for Europe.

The rapidly-growing company is developing a wide range of technologies, including hydrogen fuel cells. SAIC Maxus has been producing a fuel cell version of the V80, called the FCV80, since 2017, selling 297 fuel cell



MORE ABOUT SAIC

SAIC's Maxus division sold 92,000 vehicles in 2019, up from 84,000 in 2018 and 71,000 in 2017. It produces cars, vans and light trucks in four manufacturing plants across eastern China and in the next five years will launch new vans and pick-ups with diesel and petrol engines, full EV drivelines, plug-in hybrids and fuel cells. With more than 1m battery electric vehicles sold in the country each year, China has plans for 25% of all automotive sales to be full electric by 2025.

SAIC is also working in cooperation with global automotive manufacturers including SAIC Maxus, SAIC Volkswagen, SAIC General Motors and SAIC IVECO. As it also has a joint venture with battery provider CATL, there will be no concerns about battery supply as the full electric market continues to grow.

Clockwise from top: e-Deliver 3 dashboard; e-Deliver 3 exterior; Deliver 9 dash; 7.5t Yuejin electric trucks under consideration for import; Deliver 9 Combi body style

vans in the Chinese market to date. With a 4.7kg tank of hydrogen, which takes just three minutes to refill, the FCV80 is capable of a range of up to 500km.

The company has also built an iHDU intelligent parallel hybrid drive unit, to be installed on a range of its vehicles. The unit features five gears for the combustion engine and two speeds for the integrated electric motor. The electric drive is used for initial movement and contributes power when required for acceleration. It offers a potential fuel saving over a diesel-only vehicle of up to 22%. **TE**