

FOR ROAD TRANSPORT & COMMERCIAL VEHICLE PROFESSIONALS

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TODAY

MAN Power

Photography
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After a long stint behind the wheel
the latest MAN TGA-480 is set
to turn more than just heads.

Howard Shanks
reports.





Meandering through the heart of northeast Victoria provided a wide variety of road conditions for MAN's latest offering to demonstrate its many features.

Essentially the TGA is now a very mature model, and from the onset of the drive, the absence of niggling teething problems commonly associated with any new model irrespective of brand was more than welcomed.

What's new and makes this model special is the new 480 horsepower power plant under the cab, new transmission and a comprehensive list of features designed to make life safer and more profitable for operators and owners alike.

Yet under the gleaming black livery and multitude of LED clearance lamps is a sound work horse with a stout backbone. You don't often come across anyone who hasn't, at one time in their trucking career, experienced the strength of an MAN driveline, they simply don't come much tougher.

Essentially the TGA-480 is a real all-rounder with its 68,000kg rating, although some sceptics may argue that there might not be enough grunt in the 480 to haul B-Doubles. The other argument is how much power and how fast do you need to go?

Local testing of the MAN D2876 LF12 "common rail" engine commenced in early 2003 and incorporated various applications including intensive B-Double utilisation throughout far north Queensland. The exceptional results achieved in areas of reliability, performance and economy only reinforced the confidence MAN's engineer's had in their latest creation.

From our point of view, it was through an undulating



countryside, with a full load, that the TGA-480 demonstrated an willingness to respond briskly to requests made via the throttle. Inside the cabin exterior noise levels were virtually non-existent.

According to the marketing spiel the main advantages of the Tipmatic – which comes in two variants, direct and overdrive – include a high ride comfort, easy handling, protection of the drive components and last but not least a gain in payload of 80-kg's compared with comparable manual gearboxes.

Low operating costs in long-haul transport operations are said to be strengths of the new Tipmatic if engaged in the highest gear (12th), the unit helps the driver save up to two per cent in fuel on freeways. Depending on the overall transmission ratio, the fuel-saving range of the transmission is also reached even in the 11th gear at speeds of 50 to 70 km/h.

Operating the Tipmatic is straightforward enough, a dial in the centre console is used to select the desired gear mode, forward, reverse or the shunting feature. In terms of footwork, it's a two pedal operation synonymous with many other auto-transmissions.

Getting the MAN TGA-480 rolling is as easy as selecting the drive position, releasing the park brake and depressing the accelerator, then the TGA-480 and its Tipmatic transmission do all the work. It's that simple.

However, a wand on the steering column allows manual



operation of the transmission and hold functions enabling flexibility for the driver.

One feature of the Tipmatic worth special mention is the shunting mode, which is ideal for construction, distribution and connecting trailers. The function allows the driver to manoeuvre the vehicle in either forward or reverse on approach to buildings, ramps and working machinery very precisely and gently. When used to couple trailers the shunting mode enables the truck to gently roll under the skid plate eliminating shock on both drive train and trailer. This unit also included the transmission retarder unit which, delivers exceptional downhill braking, and is quiet in its operation.

While on the subject of braking the new model range boasts brand new state-of-the-art Knorr electronic brake system EBS-5. The driving-dynamics control system (ESP or electronic stability program) for trucks hauling semi-trailers and a host of driver-assistance systems make for enhanced safety for the driver, the vehicle and the load.

The cruise control unit, offers additional functions, which include a down hill mode that automatically engages the retarder when required to maintain the programmed down-hill speed. Another function well worth mention with the increasing number of "Flash for Cash" units cropping up through out the country is a driver controlled speed limiter. This allows the driver the to set speeds on the fly for city driving, which means that when approaching an urban 50km speed zone the driver can set the speed to 50 kph and the vehicle will not go over that speed until it is disengaged. This means drivers are able to further concentrate on what is happening around the vehicle, and not simply monitor the speed.

Attention to the day to day operation is one area that MAN has paid particular attention and the cabin is no exception. The TGA's outer appearance exudes form and function. That its aesthetic design has a function is attested by the cabs' exemplary space economy and low wind





noises. The driver's door boasts an opening angle of 87 degrees, while low and firm steps provide easy access to the cab.

The first glance at the interior reveals a straightforward design, without trendy frills and there is plenty of space inside the cab for storage required by long haul drivers. Under the bottom bunk of this twin bunk cab there is almost 600 litres storage capacity that can also be accessed through a passenger's side locker door. The side locker on the driver's side provides sealed compartment for oils and tools.

Outside the cabin particular attention was paid to enhancing the working environment for drivers with the addition of a central catwalk behind the cab that extends rearwards to the fifth-wheel coupling. The perforated checker plate catwalk makes work easier and safer during hitching and unhitching. Another noteworthy feature is the steps to rear of the cab on the passenger's side. Added to this is the swing out rear wing which reveals a sturdy grab handle for safe alighting to the rear of the cabin.

Road manners of the MAN TGA-480 are first class with superb ride quality, attributed in part to the active running gear with ECAS air suspension and the CDC shock absorbers (Continuous Damping Control) that offer more comfort and roll stability and is more gentle on the driver, the vehicle and the load than a truck was ever designed to be. The cabin hasn't missed out either with four independent air-bags which eliminates the excessive wallowing synonymous with some European vehicles in the same class.

Reflecting on the evaluation drive as the sun set over Melbourne's Westgate Bridge, the TGA-480 demonstrated it has the heart to deliver the goods on the long haul through a variety of conditions. In terms of value for money the MAN TAG-480 is very competitively priced against its competitors. The impressive list of standard features that come with the TGA-480, including the extended service intervals and greased for life driveline mean that it is one truck that shouldn't be overlooked or underestimated. 🚛

