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NISSAN'S V6 DIESEL ARRIVES... at last

The Europeans have had smooth, quiet high-torque, V6 turbo-diesels for years, but Japanese-designed 4WDs have languished with noisy, ute-derived fours. Not any more.

Renault's ownership of Nissan has finally resulted in optional V6 diesel power for the top-shelf Pathfinder and Navara models.

Branded to echo the stump-pulling torque of the new engine the Navara ST-X 550 and Pathfinder Ti 550 models are scheduled for release early in 2011.

The new V9X 3.0-litre engine produces 170kW power and 550 Nm of torque. Peak torque is achieved from as low as 1700 rpm and is available all the way to 2500 rpm, while a hefty 500 Nm is available from a mere 1500 rpm.

It couples to a seven-speed automatic gearbox. Claimed fuel economy is 9.5 litres per 100km on the combined cycle, while meeting the stringent Euro 5 emissions classification.

In addition to its new powertrain the Pathfinder Ti 550 adds privacy glass, auto headlights, sunroof wind deflector, rain-sensing wipers, bonnet protector, rear fog lamps and body coloured heated door mirrors.

Inside, an upgraded DVD player features a nine-speaker Bose audio system and an anti-theft alarm.

For the Nissan Navara ST-X 550, the additional equipment list comprises a tub liner, satin black sports bar with LED high level brake light, a hard tonneau cover with remote central locking, bonnet protector, front fog lights, headlamp washers, privacy glass and roof rails.

The new powertrain lifts the Pathfinder's towing capability to 3500kg and the Navara's to 3000kg.

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The Nissan Navara ST-X 550 will retail for $60,990 and the Pathfinder Ti 550 will retail for $75,990 when they both go on sale in January.

Tech Bits

The V9X engine was released at the Geneva Motor Show in March 2010, after a four-year development program.

It has an untypical 65-degree vee angle, which allows enough space for the single turbocharger to be mounted within the vee.

Aluminium was considered, but rejected on the basis of necessary reinforcement, in favour of compacted graphite iron (CGI). Although heavier than a pure alloy block, there is no need to add stiffening ribs or extra sound deadening material.

The compression ratio has been lowered to 16:1 to benefit not just economy and emissions but also noise, vibration and harshness (NVH), while internal engine friction is reduced by the use of ultra-smooth components such as a micro-finished forged steel crankshaft.

The V9X employs a large turbocharger, an intercooler and the latest generation Bosch common-rail fuel injection system that uses piezo injectors at up to 1800 bar.

To achieve Euro 5 compliance, the engineers opted for cooled Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR), in conjunction with a catalytic converter and a diesel particulate filter (DPF) in the same container.

To clean the DPF a seventh fuel injector is positioned in the exhaust system and operates automatically when soot builds up in the filter, to burn it off.

Oil change intervals can stretch to as much as 20,000 km for most customers.

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